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FOREWORD

No issue confronting educators today carries the significance and complexity as does the mandate through NCLB to ensure that a highly qualified teacher and principal is in every classroom and school. Few question that the quality of teachers and administrators is not what it should be to ensure America’s international competitiveness and each student’s personal academic success. The debate heats up when solutions are proffered.

_Better Leaders for America’s Schools: A Manifesto_ is a publication of the Broad and Thomas B. Fordham Foundations. The Fordham Foundation makes no apologies for its on-going criticism of the education establishment (e.g., a UCEA-type institution) that possesses the current (almost exclusive) rights to administrator preparation and has done, seemingly, more to squander its privilege than to fulfill its obligation. Hence: The Manifesto.

The Manifesto is a clear signal that the critics want to accomplish more than secure space on op-ed pages. The critics want action because, they argue, the stakes are high and the crisis is real. How real? Real enough so that urban districts such as the Cleveland Public Schools are creating district specific professional development opportunities to “grow their own” principals. And real enough so that UCEA decided to create a point-counterpoint perspective on the Manifesto and its “reach,” a reach that is at times becoming uncomfortable. These are interesting times for educators and they are being made more interesting by documents such as the Manifesto and critics of current administrator preparation such as Chester E. Finn, Jr. The purpose of this monograph is to highlight the varied perspectives, not to dismiss them. America’s young people need adults who are fighting for approaches that will make the quality of their academic lives better. Those approaches will best be achieved through dialogue and debate, not finger pointing and accusations. This monograph is an effort on the part of UCEA to foster the conversations on paper that are often necessary precursors to the types of dialogue that need to occur in colleges and universities and in the state legislatures that establish the administrative code that dictates who can serve as a principal in a local school.

The articles in this text offer a rich description of both what the Manifesto proposes (and why!) and what those within UCEA find so problematic with the critics’ cries (and why!). Also included are papers that contextualize the debate as well as two rather “personal reflections” on the Manifesto by one state chief school officer and one school board member from one of the nation’s largest school districts.

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CONTEXT FOR THE MANIFESTO

BETTER LEADERS FOR AMERICA'S SCHOOLS:
PERSPECTIVES ON THE MANIFESTO

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The debate about who should lead America's schools is often ideological and frequently contentious. The rancorous rhetoric coupled with cries for real reform create documents such as Better Leaders for America's Schools: A Manifesto. Few doubt or question the need for better teachers and administrators. The defined need for excellence in leadership is not the source of the debate. Emotions and rhetoric become intense when the paths to excellence are outlined by those from diverse standpoints. The devil is most certainly in the details of how to achieve excellence in administrative practice, and those details place the wide variety of vested parties into several different political groupings, ranging from anti-professionals to reform professionals.

The answer one proffers to the question of Who should lead? is based on a myriad of social, political and educational factors: prior experience with schools, personal beliefs about administrator quality, individual political dispositions about issues of literacy and equality, and public demands for better answers vis-à-vis how America's schools can become more high performing.

Consideration about who should teach and who should lead schools is not new, but seldom in America's rich educational history can one find a better example of the political and educational elements aligning more powerfully and explosively than they have in the past decade and especially in the past couple of years.

Better Leaders for America's Schools: A Manifesto is the quintessential example of a timely polemical document situated in a timeless ideological debate concerning who should be entrusted to lead America's schools. Educational critics such as Chester E. Finn, Jr., Frederick Hess, and others argue that America's system for managing schools is the result of an educational monopoly (i.e., the colleges and universities that prepare teachers and administrators and the system of programs they have created to dictate who should be licensed). And, like most monopolies, one salient and troubling result, argue the critics, has been academic mediocrity.

Higher education institutions seemingly have been intransigent to change, or at least any change that might make a difference in terms of administrator preparation. The monopoly has created an artificial but real barrier to persons of excellence being permitted to use what they know to help guide schools, according to the critics. Many are just waiting to help manage schools using the administrative acumen they acquired in first careers as salespersons, engineers, business leaders, or even lawyers.

If the cry for reform is not new, why is it apparently more powerful now than in the past? The answer relates, in part, to the accountability movement in America. In the past, the documented weaknesses of American schools were more perceptual than real. A bit of a Lake Wobegon effect existed in every community, an effect documented and affirmed almost annually by Phi Delta Kappan's annual poll. That is, although Americans questioned how good American schools were in general, they professed belief in the excellence of the local schools that served their children -- a sort of "my schools are better than your schools" phenomenon existed with residents professing that their children and their schools were most certainly "above average." Until the mid-1990s, the evidence to document how effective schools or teachers were was implicitly questioned only when national data were released from standardized tests, but most people emotionally disassociated themselves from the findings -- those findings, they argued, related to the schools of "other people."

The Sanders value-added modeling and the increased emphasis on international comparisons began to personalize the implications of student academic performance. Suddenly, educators, parents and reform critics had better evidence to document that America's schools were failing in far too many ways and with far too many students. The No Child Left Behind
(NCLB) legislation further increased the stakes for all involved in public schools. Schools were expected to perform better with all students. Further, it appeared as though successful schools shared a common salient characteristic: an effective administrator. The only "excuse" for poor performance was a weak teacher and, concomitantly, poor teachers were often tolerated by a weak principal. Educational critics set their sights on how both groups (teachers and principals) were prepared, and what they envisioned was an open market where schools and school districts could use their own determination of whom to hire without being constrained by license requirements dictated by a state or a licensure program prescribed by vested higher education institutions.

The reform critics began to argue for anti-professionist perspectives. Anecdotally, they documented how second career managers were waiting in the wings (i.e., scores of high caliber engineers, lawyers and other professionals figuratively just dying to assume school leadership positions, if but given a chance). Those who were part of the monopoly circled the schoolhouse wagons and began firing at those armed with market-based approaches. Their preparation programs were being questioned and their preparation practices challenged. The result was anger and frustration. Those who prepared school administrators became emotionally defensive; either they dismissed the reform reports (such as the Manifesto) as ultra-conservative vitriol or they questioned the motives of those who proposed change.

Notice that ongoing dialogue about the problem was not especially evident. Indeed, part of the rationale for this monograph was to contribute to the dialogue even if it meant starting with rather polarized perspectives.

We live in a point-counterpoint world. It is the world of Fox television's "Hannity and Colmes" and CNN's "Crossfire." Such TV programs usually start with the extremes and secure market share by contentiously debating issues on the political edges. Occasionally, very occasionally, voices of moderation and reason emerge in policy debates, but these are rare exceptions.

As readers read the point-counterpoint pieces contained in this monograph, the issue for reflection is somewhat Aristotelian in character. If hitting the mean is difficult but desirable and if one must decide on the best course for a policy impacting the public good, then what approach is the least of the "evils" to ensure a safe plan for selecting and preparing school administrators?

Each of the authors of these papers sheds light on administrator preparation, but their views and those of the Manifesto are polemical. Education as a profession is still, at best, in its adolescence. Few principles of practice are accepted in the professional preparation of all teachers and administrators. True, most programs include educational psychology courses or organizational theory classes, but the range of topics covered and how they are covered are as broad as the number of institutions preparing teachers and administrators.

Regrettably, education still lacks true and well grounded (on a well developed body of scientific literature) professional preparation standards. As the focus on scientifically based practice becomes more prominent and as the quality of the research in education becomes more sophisticated, one would hope that professionalism would become a practical reality not a theoretical possibility. Until that time, documents such as the Manifesto and Professor Hess' anti-professionist contentions will gain power and will be increasingly difficult to ignore. But they need to be considered in light of significant counterarguments such as those proffered by Professors English and Kowalski. The counterpoints are the cautions against policy by anecdote. No one questions that some "outsiders" and second careerists may find occasional success in schools. The issue is whether such administrative appointments make schools and schooling better and safer. Is deregulation the least of the evils? Or, should we all be striving for something more?

Law, medicine and most other professions have survived turmoil and reform. So must educational administration. The goal for school administrators ultimately should be to achieve professional status for those who hold the highest promise for leading effective schools. Children need persons as teachers and
as principals who:

1. Can draw on complex and esoteric knowledge and principles of practice to guide the decisions they make.
2. Are educated to know how to do something (guide a school toward educational goals) and why they should do it.
3. Can use what they know to serve the interests of the students in schools.
4. Can act with others for the purpose of accomplishing the public or common good.
5. Can act collegially to enhance mutual nurture and renewal.

Schools need to be led by professionals. This neither refutes the arguments of the Manifesto nor embraces the contentions of people such as Professor English. America’s children need administrators who are true professionals: persons who possess a unique body of knowledge, who are acting on behalf of students (or teachers) and who do so in a setting guided by the input of professional associates and engage in professional discussion with colleagues. If there is, as May (2001) contends, an intellectual, moral, and organizational nature to professionalism, educational administration is quite arguably not there yet.

The undeniable issue is how do we get there (to professionalism) from here and what do we do until we achieve that goal? On the one hand, the antiprofessionists often argue for completely lifting the barriers for those wanting to serve as administrators. An understandable desire, but it is a place we once were years ago as school boards hired a wide variety of persons (educators and noneducators) to lead schools. Little positive change resulted. On the other hand, far too many of those who currently prepare administrators are status quo professionals. Too many in the preparation monopoly refuse to critically examine whether the courses they proffer are truly effective or whether the students they are admitting are truly desirable candidates for schools subsequently to hire.

The arguments provided in this monograph are intended to be additional conceptual steps toward evolving policies that will make the lives of America’s children in classrooms better. For that to occur, educators need to understand the concerns with what currently exists, to see what reformers contend needs to occur to make schools stronger, and to then begin to respond by setting goals for the preparation of administrators that are less political and ideological and more intellectual, moral, and organizational.

This monograph is not about providing answers. Rather it demarcates the arguments with the hope that wise readers will move beyond rhetoric and toward a mediated message that is truly in the best interests of our clients (children). That message should also be one that occurs in a context that does no harm to children while challenging some of the legislative policies and management practices that may have done harm by limiting who can serve in the vital role as principal or superintendent.

Readers will notice that the monograph is organized with two manuscripts about the Manifesto. Those two pieces include excerpts from the actual Manifesto as well as a support piece written by Frederick Hess. The counterpoint pieces are written by Fenwick English and Theodore Kowalski. In different ways both describe the concerns they have with either the premises of the Manifesto or with conclusions that have been reached by its authors. The monograph concludes with perspectives of the Superintendent of Public Instruction in Ohio, Susan Zelman, and a school board member in Houston, Texas, Don McAdams. Each of these individuals provides perspective on why the Manifesto should or should not be signed.

We hope that the monograph continues the debate about administrator preparation. America’s children need quality leaders and it is imperative that people from the policy and professional communities actively seek ways to ensure that the very highest quality individuals have the opportunity and the preparation for assuming the role of administrator. Our young people are not served well by adults who refuse to engage in dialogue or consider options. America’s schools need better leaders; they also need
policy advocates who work through complex ideological positions toward efficacious intellectual, moral, and organizational solutions.

**Identifying Synthesis Leaders**

I have absolutely no doubt that some second careerists can be successful managers in schools. I also have absolutely no doubt that many, far too many, current educators who become administrators through extant programs will fail to lead meaningfully and successfully.

For me the question is: What characterizes successful leaders and how can we ensure that more schools have them? The first part of the question is addressed cogently by Sternberg (2004). Sternberg argues that successful leaders need “creativity to generate good ideas, academic intelligence to ascertain whether those ideas are good, practical intelligence to know how to persuade other people, and wisdom to make the ideas work for everyone’s benefits” (p. 113). Arguably, a corporate leader could manifest some of these naturally (and all of them with time and experience and sans professional preparation), but in the current NCLB environment it is unlikely that a second careerist would possess the practical intelligence necessary to monitor the standard expectations associated with, for example, phonemic-awareness instruction. Not a problem you say; that is, a good administrator does not need to have such comprehensive knowledge to be successful. Unfortunately, according to Sternberg, this assertion is simply not true. He argues: “If even one of these ingredients (creativity, academic intelligence, practical intelligence, and wisdom) is lacking, the leader diminishes his or her favorable position to lead effectively” (p. 113).

The value-added world of the future demands that administrators be much more skilled than they have been in the past. Three possible scenarios loom on the horizon. First, the *Manifesto* will give us, with new variations, what we already have: mediocrity with glimpses of brilliance. Second, embracing the status quo will leave schools unprepared to meet and confront the challenges that students bring and society presents. Finally, where neither option is workable, America will need “synthesis leaders.” Such leaders, suggests Sternberg, “put together ideas from different paradigms...in ways that have not been previously integrated” (p. 111).

This monograph outlines diverse ideas; we hope that some readers will become those synthesis leaders who take and shape those ideas in ways that result in even better leaders for America’s schools.

**REFERENCES**


POINT

BETTER LEADERS FOR AMERICA'S SCHOOLS:
A MANIFESTO

Note to Readers: This is an abbreviated version of The Manifesto, with revisions to shorten the full document. The endnotes, profiles of six non-traditional education leaders, and the list of initial signers, have also been deleted. Readers are encouraged to read the full version by visiting the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation website at www.edexcellence.net/Manifesto

OVERVIEW

America's public schools face a paradox. Even as states report a surplus of formally credentialed candidates for administrative positions, many schools and school systems cannot find the exceptional candidates...to lead them. Our public-education system confronts a leadership famine amidst a feast of "certified" leaders. This unhappy situation results from a flawed arrangement that annually confers administrator licenses upon thousands of educators who have scant interest in actually serving as school superintendents or principals and who...often lack the exceptional leadership qualities so urgently needed in today's schools.

We cannot afford for it to be that way. It need not be that way. And in some places this dysfunctional arrangement is beginning to change. Just as many state and local governments [are]...allowing into their classrooms talented men and women who lack conventional credentials, so are some of the nation's largest school systems—including New York and Los Angeles—beginning to welcome able people with unconventional backgrounds into leadership roles....

Today's conventional training and certification requirements for prospective school leaders...deter many educators with leadership qualities from moving into key administrative roles, while virtually barring proven leaders from different professions....One promising way to improve our schools is to lower the barriers to entry for prospective leaders, to search high and low for able people, to provide them the skills and knowledge they need to spearhead the effort to give America's children a superior education—and...make it possible...[for them] to lead, not merely to administer or manage.

Instead of erecting higher hurdles to entry, we should pursue two simultaneous courses. First, we should strive to locate and develop strong leaders within the education field by recruiting proven educators with leadership qualities who may not now be seeking such roles because of insufficient salary or because of constraints that make the job of running a school or school system unappealing. Second, we should...[seek] prospective school leaders wherever they can be found. In this document, we primarily address the second path, but it is clear that the two strategies are interconnected, particularly when it comes to creating workable terms of employment for tomorrow's school leaders.

To advocate opening the system to non-educators is...simply to recognize that many schools, school systems, and states face a shortage of quality leaders and that this problem is growing more acute. The solution is not simply to do more of what we have always done. If we are serious about leaving no child behind, we must also leave none of America's 92,000 public schools behind in the quest for effective education leaders.

THE PROBLEM

If two decades of research into school effectiveness have reached any reliable conclusion, it's that successful schools invariably have dynamic, savvy, and focused leaders—women and men who are capable of rallying educators, parents, children, and community members to achieve shared goals....A worsening shortage of top-notch principals and superintendents in public education...poses a significant barrier to our national commitment...
to educate all children to the limits of their abilities. “Many principals are leaving [the job] earlier and getting out as soon as they can. States are reporting shortages of qualified candidates,” says Vincent Ferrandino, executive director of the 30,000-member National Association of Elementary School Principals.

A recent survey of school superintendents found that fewer than two in five were satisfied with their principals’ ability to make tough decisions, delegate responsibility, engage teachers in developing policies, or spend money efficiently. When filling a principal’s position, 60 percent of superintendents agreed they must “take what you get.”...At a time when Congress has set a twelve-year timetable for bringing every American student to “proficiency” in core subjects, we delude ourselves if we think we can transform thousands of weak schools into strong ones without paying urgent attention to those who lead them.

The core issue, however, is not one of quantity. Most states have plenty of people licensed as school administrators, often more than they have positions to fill. The urgent problem is quality. Our conventional procedures for training and certifying public-school administrators in the United States are simply failing to produce a sufficient number of leaders whose vision, energy, and skill can successfully raise the educational standard for all children. State certification laws and regulations...typically include years of prior teaching experience; education-school courses in school administration, pedagogy, psychology, and philosophy; graduate degrees; and ongoing training. In most places, a parallel set of requirements applies to candidates for the post of school superintendent.

These requirements...[deter] some able leaders from even entering, while failing to prepare those who do enter for the actual challenges of producing outstanding academic results in today’s schools. When it comes to school leadership, we conclude that more—more requirements, more regulations, more courses, more credentials—is not the same as better. Being certified is simply not the same as being qualified to lead a school or school district successfully in an era of results-based accountability.

**Principals**

The principal’s job has changed profoundly in the decades since the familiar certification regimen was put in place....Today, ...the principal’s main task [is]...to develop a vision of learning; to build a school culture and instructional programs conducive to learning for all pupils; to manage staff, students, and parents with needs and problems that did not exist or were largely ignored in the past; and, above all, to produce excellent academic results as gauged by external measures such as state proficiency tests keyed to statewide academic standards.

All of these results are supposed to happen with little additional money—and in the midst of burgeoning red tape and tightening constraints, as special programs proliferate, budgets become more complex, federal, state, and local rules proliferate, bureaucracies grow more unwieldy, and collective bargaining contracts constrict independent administrative action even more, particularly with respect to personnel.

Today’s principals...shoulder greater responsibility than ever before—now typically including politics, security, public relations, finances, personnel, and technology. They have, in effect, become CEOs of small public businesses whose chief product is learning. They are profoundly accountable for their results. Yet they have scant authority to make and execute important decisions, and they are not paid much.

**Superintendents**

As the principal’s job has been redefined, so has the superintendent’s. No longer does he or she merely “run” a “system.” Doing that job well today means intervening in faltering schools, mediating between school and state, collaborating with business, civic, and municipal leaders, engaging in complex labor relations, making tough decisions about priorities, finding resources, and selecting first-rate leaders for every school in the system. These skills are the core of what superintendents must do in today’s world—but they’re not taught in colleges of education, and no amount of credentialing can create them, either.
of another domestic crisis two generations ago, “Above all, do something.”

As with teaching, so with school leadership. Promising reforms should of course be undertaken in the traditional arrangements for recruiting and training school leaders. But...we must also try bold new approaches. One such approach is to dispense with the traditional reliance on prior teaching experience, education-school courses, and other hallmarks of the credentialing system [and focus] instead...on the only measure worth considering—results in the classroom. As we accept the premise that teachers should be held accountable for classroom-level results, we would do well to take the same approach with administrators....

The idea of reducing the entry barriers for educational leaders is less revolutionary than it seems..... In the past five years, Michigan and South Dakota have stopped requiring certification of either principals or superintendents. Six more jurisdictions (Florida, Hawaii, North Carolina, Tennessee, Wyoming, and the District of Columbia) no longer issue certificates to superintendents. In these places, local school systems set their own leadership requirements. Eleven states have already created explicit “alternate routes” to certification as public-school administrators. Three more, while not terming the process “alternative,” have programs for nontraditional candidates to assume positions of school leadership. Fully 20 percent of the 58 superintendents in the Council of the Great City Schools are nontraditional, including those now serving in Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, Miami-Dade County, New York, Philadelphia, San Diego, Seattle, and Toledo. California has recently enacted a law that allows educators to become principals faster by passing a test rather than taking two more years of university course work.

Though these unconventional entry paths are not yet widely used (especially for school principals), their very existence shows that American ingenuity and pragmatism are starting to operate in this domain, too....Public education is opening itself up to talented men and women who seek to enter school leadership from
nontraditional backgrounds...education [is beginning] to experiment with the approach that most successful modern enterprises have adopted to boost their performance and productivity: Set high standards for the results to be achieved; identify clear indicators to measure progress toward those results; and then be flexible and diverse about the means by which the desired results are pursued. This strategy in education is sometimes called “standards based” or “systemic” reform. The “No Child Left Behind” legislation enacted in early 2002 adopts this approach while reinforcing the conviction that great schools are not apt to flourish unless led by great principals and superintendents.

EXPANDING THE POOL

Although we believe that many school districts could benefit from our recommendations, our most urgent concern is with the schools and communities that are least well served by traditional arrangements for identifying, recruiting, training, licensing; and employing principals and superintendents. For their sake and that of their students, it’s time to try different approaches.

In those places that are willing to innovate, we propose expanding the pool of potential school leaders by simplifying entry requirements to a bare minimum, introducing competition for training future leaders, and radically altering the terms of employment for those leaders. We urge a system that allows a wide array of talented, creative, and committed individuals to be freely considered for leadership roles in public education...we would hold school leaders to the highest standards...in terms of school effectiveness.... In short, we propose streamlining the credentialing process so that more energy and resources focus on how school leaders perform and students achieve.

The School Leader as CEO

Private and charter schools already enjoy this flexibility when selecting their leaders....More than one in ten of their principals have not previously been teachers. Yet traditional public school educators have been wary of allowing non-educators through this widened gateway. (A recent Public Agenda survey of principals and superintendents reported “overwhelming resistance to bringing in leaders from outside education.”) On average, traditional public-school principals spent 12.8 years teaching before taking the school helm and virtually none came to the job without K-12 teaching experience.

Just how necessary is this? Why do private and charter schools frequently dispense with it? The usual rationale for requiring teaching experience is that the principal is first and foremost the school’s “instructional leader”... But that does not mean the principal must be the “best” teacher or “principal teacher” in the school. He or she may assume this task directly or may instead function as the school’s CEO, delegating to others—a vice principal, head teacher or dean of instruction—the weighty and complex task of designing, delivering, and supervising curriculum and instruction.

This point bears repeating. The modern term is “distributed leadership.” It means that a school’s leadership team must possess a great many crucial abilities and forms of expertise, instruction foremost among them. But it does not mean that the person occupying the principal’s office must be an instructional expert—so long as others on the leadership team are... Considering the myriad demands made on the leaders of today’s schools,...success is apt to hinge on a team effort that goes beyond a single education “superhero” who does it all.

Note, too, that in many contemporary schools, relatively little of what principals do relates directly to instruction.... As Marc Tucker and Judy Cudding report, “Principals refer to themselves as ‘one-minute decision makers’ because they have a minute or less to decide an issue before they are confronted with the next one.” The day simply isn’t long enough for principals to focus nonstop on the specifics of effective instruction. Their big job is to lead an organization in which others can focus all day long on that core mission.

In many lines of work, nonprofit as well as commercial, the
CEO is well compensated for taking on myriad demands and long hours. Yet public-school principals are not paid very well. Compared to other occupations, the pay difference between school leaders and their team members is very thin. On average, principals make about 1.75 times what teachers earn, while in manufacturing the difference between managers and workers is 2.8, and in law the difference between a first-year full partner and a paralegal is 2.73.

In fact, however, pay is only a small part of the story. In most lines of work, an organization’s CEO has sweeping authority to make and implement decisions. Yet in today’s public schools, principals are being given more responsibility without a commensurate increase in their authority to make decisions on such things as spending, staffing, and instruction. Is it any wonder that a 1999 survey of California superintendents found 90 percent reporting a lack of candidates to fill their most recent high-school principal jobs?

It’s clear that many changes will be needed in public education if the principal’s job is to carry both the authority and the compensation that match its responsibilities. Some of these changes will be difficult to make. But expand the pool of potential school leaders—as is already being done to provide alternative pathways for teachers—to include many more people than the traditional certification system allows.

It is no more essential for every education leader to be a teacher than for the CEO of the Bristol-Myers Squibb Company to be a chemist. In any organization, the similarities between technical and leadership roles and skills are incidental and the differences fundamental. When it comes to schools, leadership is so much a function of talent and prior leadership experience that it’s a mistake to accord technical training a central position in the selection process.

**A FAULTY PIPELINE**

Though many of them turn out to be good at their jobs, traditional school leaders are groomed in a system that is both insular and linear. In fact, the way they are now prepared is a significant part of the problem.

According to standard public-education practice, teachers—and other insiders such as librarians and coaches—who wish to be principals nominate themselves by jumping through the certification hoops. Typically, a teacher takes administration courses at a school of education...then...applies for a principal’s position. Once a principal, he or she may take more courses and, if the opportunity presents itself, perhaps move into the district office. With a little luck, decent political skills, and ample ambition, an ascent to the superintendent’s desk may follow. This process demonstrates an educator’s perseverance, but it does little to spot and enhance leadership skills.

America faces no shortage of teachers willing to jump through the leadership-certification hoops, but we face an acute shortage of quality leaders for our schools. It’s surprising to note that many states actually have a surplus of people with administrator certificates. Yet school systems in many of those states cannot fill their principal vacancies with suitable candidates because few who hold the certificates are actually interested in the challenges of leading schools.

Nevertheless, even as the state’s education schools continue to crank out a surplus of “certified” principal candidates, schools in Chicago and other Illinois cities struggle to find and hire capable individuals as leaders. One reason for this anomaly: In most states, teachers who get certified as principals automatically move up the pay scale whether they move into the principal’s office or not. Thus licensure becomes a way to fatten one’s paycheck, not to enlarge one’s responsibilities. Moreover, many states subsidize the licensure process itself, not just by contributing to enhanced salaries but also by underwriting the public universities in which most of the training occurs and, in many places, reimbursing teachers for whatever tuition expenses they incur while attending those subsidized training programs. The public thus contributes generously to a process that ultimately fails to yield the school
leaders we need.

In too many instances, moreover, the instruction these would-be administrators receive in the course of the training-and-certification cycle has little bearing on the problems that real school leaders face....Harvard education professor Richard Elmore describes a “cartel” that controls access to school administration, running that system not to benefit schools but rather themselves....

This cartel surely benefits the colleges and the teachers who avail themselves of it to secure higher pay, yet it fails to produce the leaders that our schools need even as it discourages would-be leaders from taking the plunge. Christopher Lund, a former Teach For America volunteer who became the youngest school principal in Los Angeles, points to a prevailing belief “that you had to occupy certain positions before you became a principal. That’s why I think there are very few young principals, because of the hoops you have to jump through.”

We need to change that mindset. Expanding the pool of candidates for school leadership positions to include talented younger teachers and people from other backgrounds would bring new energy, ideas, and skills into our public schools. Breaking the cartel would also bring healthy competition to education schools, as other suppliers vie with them to provide school leaders with the training they need....

If we are to experiment with changes in the traditional system, what should we focus on? We consider first the characteristics of leadership; then the changes we advocate for bringing more men and women with those qualities into our public schools; and then the changes in their role that will be needed for topnotch leaders to produce the results we seek.

QUALITIES OF SUCCESSFUL EDUCATION LEADERS

Among the essential qualities that any leader must have are energy, a sense of direction, and a determination to succeed that inspires others to perform. A leader...must be able to convey a sense of urgency to those who do perform the work [and] must be able to define a goal and direct the institution’s effort toward its realization.

No definition of educational leadership encompasses all the qualities that come into play in different circumstances....A style of leadership that achieves enormous success in one setting may fail in another. As Frederick Hess, resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, notes: “There is no one style of ‘corporate’ leadership, and there neither is nor should be a unique ‘educational leadership.’”

Recognizing that diversity, let us examine more closely some of the essential qualities that superintendents and principals need in order to achieve excellence in their schools.

Superintendents

The Council of the Great City Schools found in a study of large urban school districts that had improved academically and reduced their achievement gaps that their superintendents were often marked by:

- Clear vision. Successful superintendents possess clear vision about what an effective school district looks like, a strong belief system in the worth and capacity of all children, a strong will, personal humility, and a keen sense of mission to raise student achievement.

- Strong leadership. Superintendents are driven to produce results, and are able to translate their vision into clear goals, rally the support of others to attain them, and create and sustain a sense of urgency for improving student performance.

- Relentless focus. The most effective superintendents are also able to focus their own energies and the energies of others over a prolonged period on improving student achievement in ways that are unrelenting and that are not distracted from the core mission of the school district.

- Political acuity. Superintendents in school districts large
and small are required to establish priorities and balance often conflicting interests, manage the expectations of their school boards and mayors, handle the well-being of staff, communicate clearly, share credit, absorb blame, and negotiate among disparate community groups.

- Personal accountability. Superintendents have a strong sense of personal accountability for the success of their students; they insist on the accountability of others for results and establish strong data systems to monitor progress on the district’s goals.

- Effective management. Superintendents are capable of managing complex, multi-layered organizations. They insist on operational excellence and financial integrity, and pride themselves on identifying talented staff and organizing them into an effective unit.

- Fortitude. The superintendent must, in Churchill’s words, “never surrender.” The task will always be great and the work often lonely, but, as Seattle’s Joseph Olschefske says, “This is the hell I have chosen.”

It’s a daunting list of attributes...but not one that’s confined to educators. To be sure, school superintendents...operate in a unique political stew of determined employers, vigilant press, aggressive unions, and neighborhoods fractured by race, language, income, and religion—all contending (often with scarce resources) over the one thing they care about most, their children. But the skills needed to negotiate this landscape are not unique to educators.

Individuals with these abilities can be found in many walks of life...[including] business, health care, the military, higher education, and government itself. They do not originate in university classrooms, though they may be burnished there. Yet these are the traits that employers of school superintendents should insist on—and screen for.

People who possess these skills should be welcome in public education, and a few already have been. Consider, for example,

Joel Klein, a lawyer, in New York City; Roy Romer, a former governor, in Los Angeles; John Fryer, a retired Air Force general in Jacksonville, Fla.; Paul Vallas, a former city budget director, in Philadelphia; Alan Bersin, a former federal prosecutor, in San Diego; and onetime phone-company executive Paula Dawning in Benton Harbor, Michigan.

Principals

If superintendents are education’s field marshals, principals are its front-line officers. They, too, must bring certain crucial strengths to their positions. As the country loses patience with nonperforming schools and as demands mount to measure educational performance and hold people to account for it, we can no longer afford principals who are glorified managers and disciplinarians yet who shoulder little responsibility for their schools’ performance....It’s character that matters most, not credentials. Among the most important of those attributes:

- Leadership. A principal must take charge of inspiring and directing a team of diverse people and solving institutional problems to ensure student learning.

- Focus. The principal must take steps to ensure that the school’s curriculum and teaching are aligned with state expectations—and stay that way.

- Political savvy. For principals, especially, all politics is local. They must operate in a political environment, advancing the interests of their schools while maintaining the trust and respect of teachers, students, parents, and neighborhood.

- Sense of urgency. The principal must create and sustain a sense of mission for the school, including high expectations for every student.

- Managerial competence. The principal runs what is, in effect, a midsize business. The typical principal manages
30 professionals, 14 support staffers, and a variety of outside vendors that provide services to the school, as well as a multimillion dollar budget and the care of hundreds, even thousands, of “clients.”

- Resourcefulness. The principal must be able to accomplish goals while staying within budget and, when necessary, raising additional funds or leveraging other resources.

- Energy, resilience, and dedication. A principal has to work long hours, attend to myriad details, make important decisions on the spot, and withstand pressures from above and below. Without commitment, anybody’s spirit would flag under the constant demands.

- Effective use of data. “Effective principals use multiple sources of data as diagnostic tools to assess, identify and apply instructional improvement,” according to the National Association of Elementary School Principals. They use “data to assess student achievement and factors that affect it. They know how to communicate the meaning of data and lead the school community in using data constructively to improve teaching and learning.”

Where can candidates be found who are generously endowed with these many and exacting qualities? Some...can be recruited from the ranks of educators....They can also be found in the military, in business and higher education, in private and charter schools, in other branches of public administration, and in the nonprofit worlds of foundations and community organizations....It’s precisely because leaders with these vital attributes are scarce that we cannot afford to reject anybody who may possess them simply because he or she lacks conventional state certification.

OUR PROPOSAL: QUALIFICATIONS, NOT CREDENTIALS

Hiring a superintendent or principal...includes four essential elements: certification, recruitment, training, and terms of employment. We consider each in turn.

Certification

It is a fundamental mistake for those doing the hiring to equate being certified with being qualified to lead. We see certification...as the...beginning of the process.... It does not say anything about that person’s likely effectiveness in a particular role. Those vital parts of the selection process are the responsibility of the people who employ school leaders.... Accordingly, we urge a bold reduction in statutory and regulatory barriers to entry into positions of public-school leadership.

Today’s typical certification requirements include...a minimum number of years’ teaching experience; specified academic courses; a graduate degree in education; a graduate degree in administration; a graduate degree in any field; on the job training, etc.

Because such requirements limit entry without assuring quality, we urge states to dispense with them, at least on a trial basis. We would pare the state’s certification role to these bare minimums:

- For would-be principals, the state should require a bachelor’s degree, a careful background check, and passage of a test of basic laws and regulations pertinent to the principal’s job, including health and safety standards, special-education requirements, Title I funding regulations, etc. (The test may come after a person is provisionally hired and trained, as described below.)

- For aspiring superintendents, we believe that the state should require only a college education and a careful background check.
Slashing the red tape of state-level certification does not, however, mean anyone can walk in and take up the challenge of leading schools and school systems. Even as the state allows the pool to widen, those hiring principals and superintendents should become more selective about whom they actually choose and the standards to which they hold their school leaders.

Recruitment & Selection

The mantra of those hiring school and school-system leaders should be simple: Recruit for essential skills and attributes first. Supply the specialized knowledge later. More specifically, school boards should seek people with manifest leadership capabilities bolstered by a solid track record of leadership success. School-specific knowledge and skills can follow.

If troubled schools are to be transformed, if we are to provide all our children with the kind of education that they deserve, we cannot continue to let nature take its course and hope that a sufficiency of such leaders will spontaneously emerge. They must be spotted, courted, recruited, and developed, as in all successful organizations.

To find strong leaders for all our schools, school districts must evaluate their needs and survey the talent available to meet those needs. The school board or governing authority must take the initiative in finding, grooming, and selecting its future leaders. As Tucker and Coddin of the National Center on Education and the Economy also urge, “School districts should play a major role in determining who the candidates for training will be.”

A recruitment policy presupposes that the recruiter takes the initiative. To do that well, school systems will need a far-flung network of advisers and informants that reaches well beyond their own communities and traditional sources. This outreach effort ought to be ambitious, not just the “old boys’ network” and education-school placement offices that have typically been relied on. The traditional way of finding candidates for leadership positions...[is] obviously not a promising path to find new talent or foster needed changes in schools and school systems.

We recommend new approaches to identify people with outstanding leadership potential...by spreading the word across the land that public education is an enterprise that seeks, employs, and rewards great leaders. Something of the sort has begun to occur in a handful of urban school systems like New York, Los Angeles, Seattle, San Diego, Jacksonville, and Benton Harbor, Michigan...“Finding community optimism about its schools and its neighborhoods is one of the most important roles of the superintendent,” write Larry Cuban and Michael Uscian, “then boards of education responsible for the selection process may well want to include candidates from outside education who have been similarly inspiring in their work settings, for example writers, religious leaders, community and labor organizers and politicians.”

America already has an underground market in experienced principals and superintendents who do a good job in one place and are then recruited to another. After all, the strongest evidence that a person will be an effective school leader is previous success in that role. Today, however, much of that market occurs within school systems—and among suburban systems. If we want our most challenging schools to have a good shot at engaging the very best leaders, this “marketplace” needs to become as vigorous and visible as the competition for corporate executives.

Training

Once identified as plausible candidates, how should inexperienced people be prepared for the responsibilities of public-school principals—and how can people with solid experience in one kind of school get the additional training they may need to do a first-rate job in another setting? Who can best judge what knowledge they need and how to provide it?

Today, graduate schools of education, responding to legislative and regulatory demands, offer a menu of courses that may or may not be relevant to the day-to-day realities of school leadership...As Hess points out, “a national survey of 1,400 middle school principals found that more than a third had taken no coursework focused on middle school educational practices and
that more than 70 per cent had taken two courses or less."

There's a better approach. Moreover, any training program should be firmly grounded in the day-to-day reality of running schools, drawing on what works in education, business, the military and other fields emphasizing leadership training.

Events may be moving ahead of theory. Inspired leadership programs, such as New Leaders for New Schools, the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP), and the Broad Residency in Urban Education are starting to train people from many walks of life to serve as leaders in schools and school systems. In New York City, an institute for new principals has been created that offers a corporate-style training and incentive program for our largest city's would-be principals.:

We applaud these innovations, many of them initiated by school systems, philanthropists, and entrepreneurs who resolved to take direct action to meet an acute societal need rather than leaving it to education schools and state certification regimens. School systems may find suitably trained leaders emerging from national programs, or they may opt to design their own training expectations for leaders, then provide that instruction directly or outsource it to third parties while supervising closely to ensure that the course of study doesn't tail off into the old courses that old professors have taught for decades.

Any number of approaches could be tried. Especially for potential principals without an education background, school systems could opt for an apprenticeship, mentoring, or residency program that takes place largely within successful schools under the tutelage of proven school leaders. Other school systems may launch leadership training academies that blend book learning with internships. Or they could contract with a school of education, a corporate training center, a business school, another school system, or a specialized nonprofit group to provide instruction that follows a course of study tailored to the school system's singular needs. The state could play a role in this process to ensure a measure of reciprocity from one district to another—creating some essential commonalities in these training programs (and tailoring the state principals' certification test to those elements) even as they are customized for particular school systems, perhaps even for particular jobs within those systems. The primary aim is to make sure that all such training arrangements are relevant to the job ahead and are of high quality. As with most efforts, the best way to ensure relevance, flexibility, and quality is to eliminate monopoly control—what Elmore terms the "cartel" approach—of training and open it to multiple providers and to competition among them.

For principals with prior experience leading schools, some specialized training may also be needed to prepare for the challenges of new schools or for changing circumstances within familiar schools... the best judge of what extra training is needed is... the school system doing the recruiting and employing. And here, too, the needed training can come from a wide array of providers. All that is needed is recognition of that possibility—and some imagination in exploiting it.

The training of superintendents, however, is somewhat different. Theirs is a broader view, more concerned with the expectations of the state, the currents of the community, and the priorities of the board to which they report. Political skills are a matter of judgment and experience, thus difficult to teach. They can be strengthened, however, with programs akin to those available to elected officials and corporate executives that provide seminar like forums for school leaders to work out common, real-world challenges. For example, prospective superintendents can profit from programs like the Broad Center for Superintendents, which conducts intensive sessions on such topics as student achievement and reinventing schools for success, using management and instructional data for decision making, the governance-management team, and planning and leading systems change.
Terms of Employment

Putting all of this effort into recruitment and training will be for naught unless steps are taken to ensure that principals and superintendents have the authority to lead their schools in ways that will make them successful. ... Principals need far more authority over staffing, budgeting, hiring, spending, day-to-day maintenance, and purchasing...[and] far greater latitude to pick their teams if they are going to be held accountable for the results.... Superintendents need much greater control over district curriculum, testing and assessment, and the means for holding people accountable for student achievement.

For Principals

Principals... are being held to account for their schools' performance. If they are to succeed in boosting that performance, they must be able to make essential decisions about how their schools will operate: to hire (and discharge) faculty on the basis of school need and individual performance rather than by seniority (and unconstrained by tenure rules), to deploy staff members when and where needed, and to reward exceptional performance. They must... follow reasonable procedures and not indulge in caprice, patronage, or corruption—but they also must... be in charge of those who belong to their team.

Authority over personnel, however, is only part of the answer. Principals also need greater control over scheduling, discipline, budgeting, use of technology, and instruction.

Results-based education means holding principals to a high standard for their schools' academic results; installing clear indicators to measure a school's progress toward those results; and equipping the school's leader with the flexibility and freedom to pursue those results as he or she thinks best. But it's a conditional freedom, one that lasts as long as it truly yields results. Principals must be evaluated on the basis of their schools' performance. Those who succeed should be retained, renewed, and rewarded.

Those who fail to measure up after a reasonable period (which should be negotiated into their initial contract) should not be retained.

For Superintendents

The median term of service for superintendents nationally is about six years, while urban school superintendents stay in their posts an average of 2.5 to four years depending on how one counts. Superintendents report to school boards that are sometimes elected, sometimes appointed.... Regardless of what kind of school board a superintendent reports to, he or she should be in harmony with the board's vision for change, should be clear about the district's goals for student performance, and should be given a reasonable period of time in which to attain those goals.

Though the superintendent's job is complex and multifaceted, the employer's premier goal may be as straightforward as assuring that every child in the district attains proficiency on the state's annual assessment test. This is a clear and well-defined goal that allows benchmarking for success. By tracking state test scores and other measurable goals, it is possible to tell if a district is moving in the right direction and how far it still has to go. The superintendent's employment contract should be tied to such results.

But it's unreasonable to hold executives accountable for results if they aren't able to select their own teams and deploy resources as they think best. Too often superintendents are faced with school board interference in the hiring and firing of central-office staff and principals. School boards should be considered to have one, and only one, employee—the superintendent—whom they hold accountable for meeting broad districtwide goals.
Superintendents, for their part, must be given authority to select their staffs and school principals. The superintendent, in turn, must hold them accountable....
PAYING THE PRICE

If we want better school leaders, we must expect to pay them better. School principals typically work at least a 60-hour week and an eleven-month year and...in many school systems senior teachers earn as much as or more than their principals. ...[It is a fact that those who lead...will need to be paid substantially more if we are serious about finding and keeping great leaders. As a starting point, we propose that principals’ base pay be at least 150 percent of what their schools’ highest-paid teacher receives, with the possibility of an additional 50 percent in performance-related bonuses.]

Although we advocate increasing pay and power for principals, they have no right to employment in the absence of performance. Initial contracts for principals should be no longer than three years, with annual performance reviews during that period. And while principals should be encouraged to participate in professional organizations, they must—always—be deemed part of the management team and not engage in employee-style collective bargaining.

Successful superintendents should be well compensated, too, and this is beginning to happen. The average superintendent’s salary rose roughly 10 percent from 1997-98 ($101,519) to 1999-2000 ($112,158). This trend is likely to continue.... Salaries in some of the nation’s major cities now exceed $300,000... As salary levels rise, it makes even more sense to open the door to talented individuals from outside education who will be attracted by competitive pay.

CONCLUSION

The United States is approaching a crisis in school leadership. Nearly 40 percent of its 92,000 principals are eligible to retire in the next four years. In many school systems, two-thirds of the principals will reach retirement age during this decade. And those are the leaders we already have—which for many schools is not the same as the leaders we need.

Ominous as this crisis is, it also presents...a chance to give a fair test to new approaches to finding and employing leaders for our public schools. It coincides with the greatest pressure we have ever seen for those schools to produce stronger academic results—and for their leaders to be held to account for those results. This convergence...creates the window for bold innovation.

For at least a generation, as American public education has stagnated, the conventional wisdom about leadership has focused on an old idea: certify educators to fix the problem. Today, two decades after we were pronounced a “nation at risk” as a consequence of the lackluster performance of our schools, we must face the fact that the conventional wisdom is wrong. It’s too inbred. It has relied on educators to decide the requirements for rising within the field of education—effectively barring the door to everyone else. Despite good intentions and honest effort, no evidence yet shows a correlation between the credentials required of school leaders and the results produced by their schools. In fact, a surplus of credentialed candidates to be principals is being produced while schools founder without effective captains at their helms.

The signers of...[the Manifesto] appeal to America’s common sense, its pragmatism, and its passion to do right by its children. Too many of our schools turn out students who are ill equipped for the world in which they will work and live. The shortage of truly qualified school leaders is worsening. The solution is not to impose yet more requirements but to enlarge the talent pool, to welcome into leadership posts the best men and women who can be found wherever they are today, to provide relevant training, to offer them attractive and workable terms of employment, and to hold them to account for their schools’ results.
This is becoming more common in K–12 education, at least at the superintendent level. In recent years, urban school districts from New York City to Seattle have hired candidates from outside education to lead their schools. Nonetheless, the overwhelming majority of superintendents, school district officials, and school principals in the nation rise through the ranks the traditional way—first as teachers, then as assistant principals, principals, and then up to the district office. Many of them make fine leaders. But the fact is that the traditional route to K–12 school management is not serving the nation well. The public school system suffers from a lack of effective managers at both the school and the district level. In addition, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) estimates that more than 40% of K–8 principals will retire during the first decade of the 21st century. In 2002, Paul Houston, executive director of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), said, “Five years ago, the pool of good superintendents was fairly shallow, and I thought it was as bad as it could get. I was not nearly pessimistic enough. It’s gotten worse” (Stover, 2002, p. 38). Houston (2001), has also wryly observed, “There are really just four problems with the current leadership system: the job is impossible, the expectations are inappropriate, the training is inadequate, and the pipeline is inverted” (p. 432). In turn, 60% of superintendents in a recent Public Agenda survey agreed that they have had to “take what you can get” in hiring a school principal (Farkas, Johnson, Duffett, & Foleno, 2001). For instance, superintendents rate just 11% of their principals as excellent at holding teachers accountable for instruction, just 16% as excellent at making sound recommendations on teacher tenure, and just 7% as excellent at moving ineffective teachers out of their building (Farkas, Johnson, & Duffett, 2003a). The problem is not a lack of warm bodies, but a man-made shortage of individuals with the skills, training, and knowledge to lead modern schools and school systems.

The shortage is man-made in the sense that more than 40 states require would-be principals or superintendents to acquire a license in school administration in order to apply for a job.
Typically, attaining licensure as a principal requires 3 or more years of K–12 teaching experience, completion of a graduate degree in educational administration, and an internship. In several states, candidates are also required to pass the State Leaders Licensure Assessment, an exam designed to check whether the applicants hold professionally sanctioned values and attitudes, which are discussed later in more detail. The licensing of superintendents involves similar requirements, though states are more likely to issue waivers if a school board requests one. The problem is that these licensure rules constrain the pool of potential applicants when there is no evidence that they produce more-effective school managers.

*Changing Demands*

In today’s reform environment, school leaders must be able to leverage technology, devise performance-based evaluation systems, recruit top-notch staff, apply data and research in making decisions, and motivate their teachers and students to meet state- and federally mandated goals. If the past performance of traditional school administrators gives any indication, it is unclear that teaching experience or education school coursework provides candidates with the unique combination of technical and interpersonal skills these tasks demand. Inasmuch as private sector, nonprofit, and governmental managers outside of K–12 schooling face many of these same challenges in their work, there is no reason why talented individuals with relevant leadership experiences should not also be considered for positions as school principals and district administrators.

It is time to adopt a straightforward, three-point standard for licensure as a school administrator in lieu of the existing mixture of teaching and degree requirements. Applicants for principalships, superintendencies, and other management positions should be expected to demonstrate the following qualifications:

- A college degree and evidence of personal integrity, including a criminal background check.
- Knowledge and skills that are essential to lead schools and school systems.
- Mastery of technical knowledge such as budgeting, school law, and special-education procedures and the ability to read testing data—to the extent that these requirements are essential for administrators in all settings.

While schools and school districts might seek candidates with formal qualifications or credentials, such as teaching experience, a graduate degree in educational administration, or even an M.B.A., the lack of such credentials would not prevent someone from applying for a position. School districts would be free to consider a range of candidates, rather than only those with the requisite teaching experience and graduate degree.

This approach is similar to the deregulatory strategy many states are using to solve their shortages of high-quality teachers and to attract more mid-career professionals to teaching. However, school management positions are even riper for deregulation than is classroom teaching. Teachers spend most of their time working independently in self-contained classrooms. By contrast, school managers operate as part of a team and hold more amorphous responsibilities. Not every administrator needs to possess the full range of skills required to run a school or school system. While it may be important for some members of the leadership team to know good teaching when they see it, others may bring complementary skills that can be transferred to an educational setting. It is the team taken together that needs to hold the full complement of skills.

Deregulating the recruitment and training of school managers is especially crucial at a time when the K–12 education system is moving toward using standards, testing, accountability, and choice as its chief reform strategies. To thrive in this new environment, school leaders will need a background in fields where accountability for performance is a part of their everyday working lives. The ability to build effective teams, to set goals and motivate individuals toward meeting them, and to create a sense of purpose and mission in the schools is now even more pressing. Given these new demands, it is imperative that school boards not be unduly constrained by state regulations that dictate whom they may
consider for school management positions.

Instead of recruiting effective leaders from other fields, public schools opt to pull an enormous share of principals and superintendents from the ranks of the nation’s gym teachers. In 1999–2000, 34% of the nation’s principals had been coaches or athletic directors (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). What uniquely equips a high-school coach rather than a director of a tutoring program to lead an elementary school? It might be that coaches are used to managing and motivating teams in a competitive setting and enforcing basic discipline, but this gives lie to the notion, popular among experts on educational leadership, that principals and superintendents must be “instructional leaders.”

Recruiting leaders from other fields would yield a range of benefits—among which are the benefits to school administrators themselves. Presently, educational leaders enjoy little respect. While high-ranking military personnel and members of urban mayoral administrations often find themselves with plum offers from the private sector when they leave those fields, few school managers are seen as qualified to do much else. Prying open the channels between leadership in education and other fields will help reverse the tendency to ghettoize school administrators. This would force school systems to pay a fair rate for managerial talent and would create new opportunities for administrators to command the kind of professional support and respect enjoyed by their counterparts in other sectors.

The new crop of managers will also demand the same tools and responsibilities that they enjoyed in other fields. School leaders who are not given the right to hire and fire teachers, reward and sanction personnel, or allocate resources cannot be held fully responsible for the results. The first to benefit from these changes will be the thousands of hard-working principals and superintendents who have grown frustrated with their inability to run their organizations effectively. This new agenda is not an attack on school administrators. It is a commitment to professionalize their chosen field.

Closing the Door to Talent

The burden of proof regarding licensure should rest on those who embrace it. Why? Licensure prohibits those who do not meet the guidelines from applying for work. This makes sense only if we are certain that someone who has not taught and has not completed a university-based program in school administration cannot be an effective principal or superintendent. If we are not certain, if we just believe that former teachers will generally make better principals, then licensure is neither necessary nor desirable. It is not necessary because, if former teachers and graduates of programs in educational administration are more qualified, school districts will hire them ahead of other candidates. It is not desirable because, unless we believe that nontraditional candidates cannot be effective, there will be times and places where the best candidates are not licensed—and districts will nonetheless be barred from hiring them.

Meanwhile, the current approach has fostered a leadership culture that is ill-suited to manage by objective, ill-equipped to implement new technologies, and reluctant to be held accountable for student learning. A 2003 Public Agenda survey of school principals found that 45% thought it a “bad idea” to “hold principals accountable for student standardized test scores at the building level,” and just 41% thought it a “good idea” (Farkas, Johnson, & Duffett, 2003a, p. 38). We need principals who welcome responsibility for student learning, whether they came from the classroom or not.

Licensure is a crude device, one best suited to ensuring that the clearly incompetent cannot prey on the public. It is especially well suited to professions like medicine or law, where practitioners are often independent and their quality of work is difficult for clients to gauge. Principals and superintendents, by contrast, work in a highly visible context—within a large public organization where their performance is increasingly monitored by state officials, local activists, businesspeople, journalistic outlets, and others.

The problem with requiring school managers to earn a license is that the work of a school principal or superintendent is typically
shaped by that person’s immediate context. Job requirements evolve over time and differ from one milieu to the next. Leadership in other lines of work has much the same quality. This is why we cannot imagine licensing business or political leaders, and why the M.B.A. is not a license, but a credential that employers value as they see fit. Even in higher education, where formal credentials are required to become a professor, additional credentials are not necessary to become a dean or president. In fact, as fundraising and running a multimillion-dollar institution have become the chief responsibilities of an academic presidency, more and more universities are looking to nontraditional candidates.

Three fundamentally flawed assumptions underlie the existing approach to licensure:

Only teachers can lead.

This notion begins with the claim that only a former teacher can provide “instructional leadership.” The belief that principals need to have taught rests on two articles of faith: that only former teachers can monitor classroom personnel or mentor teachers. Both claims are of dubious merit.

The first may have been plausible when administrators could judge a teacher’s effectiveness only by observing classes and monitoring parental complaints. Today, however, there is a wealth of information on achievement, and entrepreneurial managers are finding ways to gather data on other facets of teacher performance. In the era of accountability, the always minimal value of a principal’s sitting in the back of a teacher’s classroom three times a year has diminished even further, while the value of understanding and applying data is at a premium. In addition, an effective principal can use master teachers to evaluate and support their peers, as an increasing number of schools are doing.

The claim that only former teachers can mentor is equally problematic. In those schools or systems where no one else is available to work with teachers on curricular or instructional issues, administrators must play this role. Such situations are quite rare, however. More typically, principals and superintendents lead teams that include a variety of individuals with different strengths.

Administrators who use their team wisely can provide more useful assistance than overstretched leaders drawing on only their personal knowledge. In recent years, a number of nonteachers have performed competently as district superintendents or charter school principals. Doctors, lawyers, engineers, and other professionals routinely work in organizations led by individuals from other fields. Are teachers alone so iconoclastic or fragile that they can work only for one of their own?

In fact, the skills that characterize effective teachers may actually hinder their performance as managers. Though experts in educational leadership argue that principals and superintendents—especially those in troubled venues—must be proactive risk-takers who engage in “creative insubordination” (Crowson, 1989, p. 412), research has found that “teachers tend to be reluctant risk takers” (Mendez-Morse, 1992, p. 12). A 2003 Public Agenda survey found that barely one in five teachers thought linking teachers’ salaries to their effectiveness would help motivate teachers or reward high-performers, while more than 60% worried that it would lead to jealousy. Even though 78% of teachers reported that at least a few teachers at their schools were “simply going through the motions,” just 23% thought unions should make it easier for administrators “to fire incompetent teachers” (Farkas, Johnson, & Duffett, 2003b).

Even professional managers express profound anxiety about tasks like delivering negative evaluations and terminating employees. It is not much of a stretch to suggest that teachers reluctant to link rewards to student performance or unwilling to support steps to purge ineffective teachers may be ill-suited to some unpleasant but crucial managerial tasks. The years that principals or superintendents spent as teachers immersed in classroom culture may leave them hesitant to take the harsh steps that performance-based leadership sometimes requires.

Quality control.

One argument for licensure is that it screens out incompetent aspirants. But earning a master’s or doctorate in educational leadership does no such thing. Even elite programs impose
shockingly little quality control. Education schools do not make it possible to examine admissions data specific to their administration and leadership programs, but we can garner a rough idea of selectivity by comparing overall admissions data from colleges of education with those from graduate business schools.

A few examples from the 2004 U.S. News and World Report rankings of graduate programs help to illustrate the point. Penn State University’s 33rd-ranked business school accepted 24% of its applicants, admitted students had a mean GMAT score of 645. Meanwhile, the university’s school of education, which housed the nation’s 6th-ranked educational administration program, accepted 48% of its doctoral applicants, and the admitted students had a mean verbal GRE score of 484. (Note that GMAT scores are a combination of math and verbal scores, and thus scores on the GMAT and GRE do not directly correspond. However, individual students who take these exams tend to perform similarly on both.) Ohio State University’s 19th-ranked business school accepted 25% of its applicants, and admitted students had a mean GMAT score of 655, while the university’s education school, home to the nation’s 2nd-ranked administration program, accepted 44% of doctoral applicants, and admitted students had a mean verbal GRE score of 482.

Professionalism.

Today, due in large part to licensure, educational administration is a subspecialization of the sprawling field of leadership and management. Experts on educational leadership dismiss the existing canon of management theory and practice, instead offering their own “educationally unique” formulations of leadership. Prominent thinkers, such as Sergiovanni in Leadership for the Schoolhouse (1996), argue that “corporate” models of leadership cannot work in education. Such simple-minded dichotomies are mistaken. There is no one style of “corporate” leadership; nor is there a unique “educational leadership” (Sergiovanni, 1996, p. xiv).

The result is training that does not expose educators to the body of thought that conventionally trained executives deem essential. In fact, just 8% of superintendents and 21% of principals report that certification ensures that a principal has what it takes to be a good administrator (Farkas et al., 2003a). Asked about what provided the most valuable preparation for their current position, just 2% of superintendents and 4% of principals mentioned their required education coursework (Farkas et al., 2003a). Major publishers produce lists of “educational administration” texts that number hundreds of books, though they publish nothing similar on managing pharmaceutical firms, retirement communities, or fire departments. The absence of cross-pollination leaves school administration a lightly regarded backwater.

Surveying some of the titles prominently advertised in Corwin Press’s fall 2002 catalog illustrates the problem. Widely used in administrative training are books like Leading for Diversity: How School Leaders Promote Positive Interethnic Relations (Henze, 2002); Caring Enough to Lead: Schools and the Sacred Trust (Pellicer, 1999); and Leadership and the Force of Love: Six Keys to Motivating with Love (Hoyle, 2002). These volumes never explain why conventional management wisdom and analysis are inappropriate for schooling.

The Costs of the Status Quo

Licensure makes it more costly to seek a management position in education, making other professions relatively more attractive. If the hurdles screened out the incompetent or ill-suited, that would be one thing. However, there is no evidence and little reason to believe that one’s willingness to pay tuition for lightly regarded courses during evenings, weekends, and summers says much about one’s aptitude or suitability for leadership. Willingness to bear such burdens may reflect a lack of interest in teaching, a lack of attractive alternatives, or hunger for a position of authority just as readily as a commitment to learning.

It is simply not the case, as proponents of licensure argue, that school management positions are so challenging that nobody wants
them. Recent years have witnessed the creation of several programs that train aspiring nontraditional principals and school district officials. In 2003, New Leaders for New Schools received 1,012 applicants for 70 fellowship slots in its cohort of principals-in-training; the Broad Foundation’s Urban Superintendents Academy had over 650 inquiries and more than 160 applications for 20 slots; and the KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) Foundation’s principal academy had 250 applicants and accepted 11 fellows (Broad Foundation, KIPP, & New Leaders for New Schools, personal communications, 2003).

The most motivated candidates may be the least willing to sit through poorly regarded courses or to suffer procedural hurdles. In fact, an extraordinary number of entrepreneurs pursue charter school management positions—despite the obstacles, uncertainty, and reduced compensation—because they are unwilling to wait the requisite years before being permitted to seek a position in a conventional district school.

Tried but Not True

Present reform efforts fall into opposing camps. One is represented by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium’s (ISLLC) efforts to define “standards” for educational administration and to stiffen the requirements for licensure. The idea is to improve the training of potential principals and superintendents—a worthy goal, but one whose effect would be to further narrow the field of candidates and to do so in perverse and undesirable ways.

Formed in the 1990s, ISLLC is a coalition of administrator organizations, education unions, education schools, and other education client groups. Members include the American Association of School Administrators, National Association of Secondary School Principals, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals. In line with what these groups have long advocated, the ISLLC standards assess individual beliefs rather than knowledge or skills. The six standards assert that school administrators should “promote student success” by doing things like “facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community,” “collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources” and “influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996). These sentiments are pleasing primarily to those who embrace the ISLLC’s notion of “diversity,” endorse constructivist pedagogy, and believe school leaders ought to wield political and legal levers to advance “social justice.”

The problems are made clear by the ISLLC School Leaders Licensure Assessment, which several states now use to assess the competence of candidates for principalships. First administered in 1998, the test has since been adopted by Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, and Arkansas, and is currently under review in Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Virginia. While the exam’s designers claim that it is “grounded in research,” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996) the exam does not assess legal, budgetary, management, research, curricular, or pedagogical knowledge—but determines little more than fidelity to ISLLC values. As the ISLLC’s chairman, professor Joseph Murphy, concedes, “[The exam] is a statement of values about where the profession should be” (Beem, 2002)—or at least, where it should be according to Murphy and his allies.

Of the four sample situations and 25 sample questions in the on-line preparation materials (Educational Testing Service, 2002), not one asks a candidate to exhibit an understanding of scholarly research, legal statute, or budgetary concepts. One sample vignette asks candidates to determine what is “in the best interest of the particular student” (p. 12) in a case where a high-school senior failing a class asks the principal if he can drop the class, even though permitting the student to do so is “contrary to school policy” (p. 12). In the example, the principal permits the student to drop the class, and test-takers are then asked to explain whether this
decision served the student’s “best interest” (p. 12). Endorsing the principal’s action earns the test-taker a perfect score while those who recommend denying the request are marked down. ISLLC’s public materials indicate that graders would give a score of zero to the following candidate response:

The principal’s action is wrong... Much more is learned in high school than the academics. Students must learn that there are consequences for their actions... If this student is allowed to graduate, the lesson he will learn is that he doesn’t have to accept the consequences for his actions. (Educational Testing Service, 2002, p. 14)

As even Martha McCarthy (2001), Chancellor Professor of educational leadership at Indiana University and a staunch defender of educational administration programs and licensure, has noted, “It is difficult to envision that responding to a set of vignettes—no matter how skillfully crafted—can confirm that administrative licensure candidates exhibit the desired skills, knowledge, and values for effective school leaders” (p. 1).

The other reform strategy pursued in recent years, by large urban districts from New York to San Diego, is to recruit celebrity superintendents from other professions, such as Joel Klein, the Clinton administration’s lead antitrust lawyer, who is now serving as chancellor of the New York City schools. There is nothing wrong, per se, with pursuing high-profile nontraditional superintendents. Such hires have imported a number of promising executives into the schools and challenged shopworn assumptions. However, searches for nontraditional leaders too often devolve into a quixotic quest for “white knights.”

Most current nontraditional superintendents were hired not on the basis of a reasoned assessment of their strengths and skills but because they were considered forceful individuals. The fascination with “leadership” that can be readily transferred from one field to the next has sometimes been shockingly simplistic, as with the presumption that military generals would make good superintendents because they run taut organizations or that attorneys would because they are familiar with law and politics

(Mathews, 2001). Through June 2001, 28 nontraditional superintendents had led American school districts in recent decades. Of those 28, 10 were former military officers and 4 were attorneys. The rest had worked in a variety of private and public sector capacities.

American education does not need a few dozen superintendents swimming against the tide, but tens of thousands of competent superintendents, principals, and administrators working in tandem. The problem with today’s efforts is that they are not part of larger efforts to recruit thoughtfully out of an expanded candidate pool, to build and support teams, and to rethink management. Instead, they are too often one-shot prayers in which the district hopes that charisma and personal credibility can jumpstart their institutions.

In the years immediately following World War II, business administration was a minor profession, and business schools were institutions of modest repute, viewed as intellectually suspect stepcousins to universities’ economics departments. As management became more crucial to the postwar economy, the quality of executives improved, and business schools responded to competitive forces. Businesses were forced to discipline their hiring through a new reliance on the bottom line, and business schools became increasingly selective and focused on teaching critical economic, accounting, and quantitative content in a useful and relevant fashion. Today, America’s executive work force is admired across the globe, and its business schools are among the nation’s most prestigious educational units. This all transpired without formal licensing; neither business schools nor America are any the worse off because Bill Gates and Michael Dell never obtained an M.B.A. The world of educational leadership is ripe for a similar revolution.

This essay is adapted from “A License to Lead? A New Leadership Agenda for America’s Schools” (Progressive Policy Institute, 2003).
REFERENCES


COUNTERPOINT

LEARNING “MANIFESTOSPEAK”: A
METADISCURSIVE ANALYSIS OF THE FORDHAM
INSTITUTE’S AND BROAD FOUNDATION’S
MANIFESTO FOR BETTER LEADERS FOR
AMERICA’S SCHOOLS

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“To illustrate a principle you must exaggerate much and you must omit much” (Bagehot, as cited in Hoffer, 1951, p. 59).

The public release of the anonymously authored Better Leaders for America’s Schools: A Manifesto under the aegis of the Broad Foundation and the Thomas B. Fordham Institute (2003), is an example of an ideology juxtaposed at a critical intersection where the power to control public education is contested. The use of the term ideology is appropriate to describe the Manifesto. An ideology is a belief system which postures as reasonable or scientific attempting “to map out the social order and guide political action” (Boudon, 1989, p. 25).

Among the defining criteria of an ideology are its adherence to a particular normative belief, the intolerant nature of its precepts, the emotional manner of its promulgation, and its association with the institutions which are involved with putting into effect the belief system undergirding its major premises (Boudon, 1989). The Manifesto illustrates all of these characteristics. It does so by inverting the normal thrust of an ideology as a series of doctrinaire assertions, to an attack upon the current system of control in public education, that is, an attempt to discredit the current institutions which prepare and license school leaders who are in turn the current stewards of the public schools.

In approaching the Manifesto, Fairclough’s (1992) theory of social discourse and change is instructive. Fairclough (1992) asserts that texts such as the Manifesto are nested in a larger discursive practice and these are, in turn, linked to social structures. In other words, it would be a mistake to simply read the Manifesto as a separate and isolated text. To understand the meaning of the Manifesto one must locate it in the larger stream of socio-political struggle going on in the United States regarding the future course of public education.

At the core of the debate is political hegemony of schooling. As Fairclough (1992) observes:

Hegemony is about constructing alliances, and integrating rather than simply dominating subordinate classes, through concessions or through ideological means, to win their consent. Hegemony is a focus of constant struggle around points of greatest instability between classes and blocs, to construct or sustain or fracture alliances and relations of domination/subordination, which takes economic, political, and ideological forms. (p. 92)

When it comes to penetrating the purpose and content of the Manifesto one must see clearly through the shroud of anonymity in which it is cloaked. One of the functions anonymity performs is to block a reader from coming to grips with the backgrounds and biographies of its authors because as Bakhtin observed, “Utterances within the context of political output are rarely isolated grammatical cases; they operate within historical frameworks and are frequently associated with other related utterances of texts (as cited in Wilson, 2003, p. 404). It is this connection of intertextuality, the idea of the linkage of texts within a specific historical moment that is crucial to understanding the significance of the Manifesto.

At the center of the connectivity among texts is the figure of Chester “Checker” Finn, a signatory of the Manifesto and the President of the Fordham Foundation. A metadiscursive analysis shows that Finn is the silent master speaker of the Manifesto, a “speaker [that] is situated above or outside [his] own discourse, and is in a position to control and manipulate it” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 122). This is an interesting and critical juxta-positioning where Finn’s conservative political viewpoints, which are highly correlated
with those expressed in the *Manifesto*, can be shielded from
counter-factuals and probing connections to his earlier texts. But
as Foucault (1972) has observed, any work is but a node within a
larger network. For the *Manifesto* to be understood more clearly, it
is necessary to at least see the line of argument and the opinions
anchored to earlier works by Finn, notably his 1991 book *We Must
Take Charge* and even to his recent endorsement of work by Sol
Stern (2003) in which he wrote:

> What a powerful and timely book! The Supreme Court says
school choice is constitutional. Now Sol Stern explains why
it’s the essential alternative to a smug, sclerotic and
monopolistic public-education establishment that never puts
the kids’ or parents’ interests first. If you didn’t already
understand the need to carve an exit door for children,
Stern’s harrowing tales will open your eyes and boost your
blood pressure. (Finn, 2003, p. 23)

Finn has long been identified as a neoconservative along with
fellow travelers William Bennett, Lamar Alexander, and Diane
Ravitch (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). All but Ravitch are signers of
the *Manifesto* as of January 20, 2004. Finn also has a history of
direct involvement in the privatization of schools including a stint
with the Edison Schools (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). The Edison
Schools were once considered a Wall Street whiz kid and Edison
stock once had a value of $760 million (Forelle, 2002; Tomsho,
2003). Today Edison has amassed losses totaling $291.8 million and
suffered an SEC investigation into its accounting procedures. Carol
Granatt, a leader of a San Francisco parent group resisting Edison
said: “The Edison concept was based on wishful thinking, naivete
and an arrogant assumption that private enterprise could make
quick work of issues that challenge the public sector” (Tomsho,

The same problems are replete throughout the *Manifesto.*
And Finn is no stranger to using such publications as propaganda.
When he served as Assistant Secretary of Education during the
Reagan Administration, he was the main force behind publishing
*What Works: Research about Teaching and Learning* (1986). A

respected researcher, Gene Glass (1987), commented that:
The political goals of *What Works* are those of the
administration that produced it: to disestablish the federal
bureaucracy in education... if, as *What Works* argues, the
findings of educational research are “common sense,” then
the apparatus of federal support for educational research
that has grown up since 1956... is unnecessary. (p. 8)
Similar ideas undergird the *Manifesto* (Broad Foundation &
Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003). The pronounced cries of
“common sense” often appear in journalistic discourse and op ed
opinion page pieces attempting to simplify complex problems so
simple solutions can be applied. The stylistic language of the
*Manifesto* or “Manifestospeak” is appropriate for an attempt to
popularize ideology on a Foundation’s web page. It is as Cotter
(2003) notes a “‘franchised media language,’ like McDonald’s”
meant to be “consumed across a wide geographical and
ethnographic swathe” (p. 431). The *Manifesto* is not a scholarly
piece, but a highly stylistic text that encodes the values and
ideology of the conservative perspective on public education. Its
purpose is to reinforce the values embedded in the business
community and contemporary business leadership regarding the
normative advantages of competition and profit, and to reach out to
other audiences who have a variety of ulterior motives to dis-
establish public education, including companies and agencies who
want to get involved in preparing educational leaders for profit.

DE-CONSTRUCTING THE IDEOLOGY IN
**MANIFESTOSPEAK**

**Steps 1 and 2: Bragging About the “Success” of Alternative Routes to Teaching**

The ideological line of braggadocio in *Manifestospeak* is
illustrated in Exhibit 1. In order to marshal support for the
Manifesto, which is to de-credential administrators and lower
training standards, the document begins by citing the “salutary”
effects of creating alternative routes to teaching (see 1 and 2 in
Exhibit 1). In this the Manifesto portrays the existence of such alternatives with their “success.” A claim is proffered that such alternatives have created “an infusion of enterprise and innovation in the ways that teachers are recruited and trained” (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003, p. 5). The “evidence” consists of a review that some states allow alternative routes, a quote from U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige to the effect that, “Alternative routes to certification demonstrate that streamlined systems can boost the quantity of teachers while maintaining—or even improving—the quality” (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p. 19), and a laudatory section regarding TFA (Teach for America) where the GPAs (grade point averages) are extolled, and an estimation that they have influenced “the lives of more than 1.25 million children” (Broad Foundation & Thomas B.

Exhibit 1
The Line of Argumentation in the Manifesto

1. “Catching the Wave” Alternative routes to teaching are infusing enterprise into the schools
2. This “experiment has not failed” (p. 6)
3. We should try the same approach for administrators (no teaching exp. required)
4. The “surplus problem”
5. All those with credentials are not qualified (a tautology)
6. Some are moral cowards
7. We have a shortage of “qualified” leaders
8. We have a “leadership” crisis in public education

What the anonymous authors selectively omit from this passage is that Secretary Paige’s quotation is referencing a report from Houston in which TFA candidates were not compared to experienced teachers but to inexperienced teachers, and they did about as well as “other inexperienced teachers” (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002, p. 22). Manifesto writers fail to mention that TFA candidates “had extraordinarily high attrition rates…Over the 3 years studied, from 60 to 100% of TFA recruits had left after their 2nd year of teaching” (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002, p. 22) so whatever “infusion of enterprise and innovation” was very short lived indeed.

But the impression is left in Manifestospeak that alternative routes to teaching are “the wave” of the future, a trend which should be emulated in the preparation of school administrators. Manifesto authors never bother to inform the audience that, “Studies employing national, state, and other data sets have reported significant relationships between teacher education and certification measures and student performance at the levels of the individual teacher” (Goldhaber & Brewer, 1997; Hawk, Coble & Swanson, 1985; Monk, 1994, as cited by Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002, p. 16).

Manifesto text includes verbal table pounding when exhortations are advanced that “public education should focus on the only measure worth considering—results in the classroom” (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003, p. 6). And Manifesto voices make no bones that that means improved test scores (p. 19). Since an ideology is being advanced, research that points in the opposite direction is ignored:

We find that the type…of certification a teacher holds is an important determinant of student outcomes. In mathematics, we find that students of teachers who are either not certified in their subject…or hold a private school certification do less well than students whose teachers hold a standard, probationary, or emergency certification in math. Roughly speaking, having a teacher with a standard certification in mathematics rather than a private school certification…results in at least a 1.3 point increase in the mathematics test. This is equivalent to about 10% of the standard deviation on the 112th grade test. (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000, p. 139)

Manifestospeak fulminates about the notion of credentials and university preparation in the case of school administrators as unnecessary, but the case rests on the confirmation with lateral
entry into teaching. There is not only no empirical substantiation to support the case, but evidence that is counter-factual is omitted. For example, research that indicates the courses offered as unimportant and set in credentialing requirements such as pedagogy, psychology and other teacher education requirements make a difference (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003). And while the document claims that “one-third of new teachers are entering via these unconventional routes,” no mention is made that they leave teaching faster than traditionally prepared teachers do (see Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Ingersoll’s (2002) follow-up survey on teachers for the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) indicates the difference specific courses in the teacher education curriculum have on retaining classroom teachers thereby reducing the first year teacher attrition rate. The figures are shown in Table 1:

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<th>Table 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ingersoll's Teacher Follow-Up Survey 2000-01 On First Year</td>
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<td><strong>Attrition Rates for Teachers With and Without Specific Preparation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Course/Training</strong></td>
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<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection/use of instructional materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child psychology/learning theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Observations of other classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feedback on teaching</td>
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<td>Practice teaching</td>
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The fact that *Manifesto* authors do not cite or do not know the difference teacher preparation makes should not be surprising. Their ideological bias has been around a long time. Twelve years earlier Checker Finn wrote, “any well-educated adult of sound character, who knows a subject and is willing to try teaching it to children, should be considered a candidate for entry into the classroom” (1991, p. 268).

The *Manifesto* never cites the acute teacher shortage prevailing today by which the states are opening entry to teaching out of desperation. That would spoil the argument for alternative routes based on the idea it simply is the “new wave.” Alternative routes for teachers would be especially difficult because as the anonymously cloaked authors transform the alleged “success” of alternative routes to teaching into an idea worth trying with administrators, they face a different problem; that is, there is an abundance of certified school administrators. The real shortage of classroom teachers works against the contortions they employ to manufacture the crises in educational leadership, that is, while there is a surplus of potential school leaders (those holding credentials), there is actually a shortage of “qualified” leaders (who probably do not have such credentials).

To admit that traditional teacher preparation reduces the real shortage of teachers by reducing the attrition rate, would also contradict a long standing bias Finn has against schools of education as places where alien ideas abound which he finds offensive or absurd (Finn, 1991). These include the multiculturalists, the relativists, the deconstructivists, and the educationists (Finn, 1991). Schools of education are also places that publish journals (he particularly singles out Harvard and Columbia) which emphasize grievances that are “very different than most citizens would name. The villains…include racism, homophobia, Eurocentrism, sexism and conservatism” (Finn, 1991, p. 225). Schools of education are institutions where such beliefs have been generated and they are among “the most despised institutions in the educational universe” (Finn, 1991, pp. 222-223).

But we should not take our eyes from the silent speaker’s real agenda that propels the proposals for de-credentialing in the *Manifesto* which he stated over a decade ago, “If we want revolutionary changes in American education we have to overhaul its power structure and its ingrained practices” (Finn, 1991, p. 234). Changing the power structure means changing the people in it, the way they conceptualize education, their motivation for being in schools, and how they think about schools and children. In this respect Finn hasn’t changed from his declarations in *We Must
Take Charge (1991):
I see impressive potential in ideas such as private contracting with schools for educational services... As for the involvement of businessmen (and women), we should welcome them to the conference room, particularly when they do not check their line orientation at the door. (p. 233)

Finn’s efforts are backed by the Eli Broad Foundation. Broad is a Los Angeles businessman with a $4 billion dollar fortune who believes that the problem with improving performance in the public schools (as defined by standardized tests) is that:

principals and administrators—typically former teachers with scant business training—are overwhelmed trying to run their organizations and aren’t focusing effectively on education and academic achievement. Train them in the same management skills used at the best companies—and replace laggards with savvy outsiders—and the entire system could improve sharply. (Weinberg, 2003, p. 106)

To this agenda, so obviously embedded in the Manifesto, Broad and his wife have designated $400 million in their Foundation to train new school board members and superintendents and funding “apprenticeships for aspiring principals and attract[ing] newly minted M.B.A.’s and lawyers to big city school management jobs” (Weinberg, 2003, p. 106). The ideology of turning to big business for leadership has a very old tradition in educational administration, beginning with the continuing infatuation with Frederick Taylor’s scientific management (Callahan, 1962) now intertwined with Edward Deming’s (1986) total quality management.

Steps 3-8: Transmogrifying a Surplus Into a Shortage and Manufacturing a Crisis

Perhaps the neatest trick in Manifestospeak is how the anonymous proponents transmogrify a surplus into a shortage and finally into a crisis. In Step 3 (see Exhibit 1) the case has been made for the alleged “success” of alternative routes into teaching and advanced to administration with the declaration, “As with teaching, so with school leadership” (Broad Foundation & Thomas F. Fordham Institute, 2003, p. 6). Labeling the teaching alternative route as a “promising reform” the Manifesto buttresses a plea for alternatives to leadership preparation with a tautology “there’s no convincing evidence that any one strategy will work in every situation” (p. 6). The text never indicates who has ever made such a claim. This piece of information is also anonymous.

Manifesto writers are fond of using tautologies to support their premises. The most bare-faced example is one that is employed to erase the surplus of educators holding administrative credentials (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003) when they say, “Being certified is not the same as being qualified” (p. 4). This statement would be true of nearly every profession and occupation which functions on a licensure system including medicine, law, the health professions, airline pilots, and beauty parlor operators. Other tautologies are peppered in the Manifesto: “A leader may not personally possess every skill or expertise needed to perform every task in the organization...No definition of educational leadership encompasses all the qualities that come into play in different circumstances. There’s no one model” (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003, p. 11).

An argument which depends upon tautologies lacks independent verification, most usually independent empirical verification. This is a serious shortcoming of the line of argumentation presented. It is less serious in an ideology. In the case of the fact that many states have a surplus of people holding administrative credentials, Manifesto spin meisters resort to disqualification via tautological support insisting that all those holding certificates are not really leaders (p. 14), and then tarring the rest as the equivalent of moral cowards “because few who hold the certificates are actually interested in the challenges of leading schools” (p. 10).

So now we arrive at Step 7 (see Exhibit 1) where Manifesto authors have transformed a surplus into a shortage via tautological
legerdemain: “Our conventional procedures for training and certifying public school administrators in the United States are simply failing to produce a sufficiency of leaders whose vision, energy and skill can successfully raise the educational standard for all children” (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003, p. 4).

The argument that is advanced goes something like this: Schools of education have produced a surplus of teachers with administrative certificates, but these are not really “quality” leaders, and there are those not even interested in leading schools (the moral cowards). The ideological norm is buttressed with testimonials and the unnamed authors cherry pick other data to fit their biases. For example, administrative turnover becomes “evidence” that there is insufficient quality in educational leadership (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003, p. 4) which is an extension of the moral cowardice accusation and evidence of not being prepared for the challenges of leadership. They also conveniently assume that anyone who leaves an administrative position is “high quality” (or in their word “a worsening shortage of top-notch principals and superintendents in public education,” p. 4). The result is the urgent problem of quality” (p. 4). An actual study of superintendency turnover concluded that, “the rate of attrition has remained relatively constant since the end of World War II” (about 6 to 7%) (Björk, Keedy, & Gurley, 2003, p. 423).

Let me offer two empirical counter-factuals to the Manifesto’s (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003) textual contortions, “In fact, a surplus of credentialed candidates to be principals is being produced while schools founder without effective captains at their helms” (p. 20).

The first counter-factual consists of the results of a survey of 42,209 teachers from 1,471 schools in 115 of North Carolina’s 117 school systems regarding working conditions. Seventy-six percent of the schools had a response rate of 50% or higher. The study, commissioned by North Carolina Governor Mike Easley (2003), was conducted by Duke University’s Center for Child and Family Policy and reported:

Of the five categories of working conditions (time, facilities, leadership, empowerment, and professional development) respondents gave Leadership the highest average score (4.2). Within this domain, respondents gave the highest values to statements describing leaders as strong and supportive, holding teachers to high standards, and providing a strong shared vision for the school. (p. 5)

Teachers were less sanguine about the principals’ ability to prevent disruptions, to address concerns regarding leadership, or to give priority to supporting teachers. But this is a far cry from the lopsided portrait sketched by Manifesto henchmen. So-called “top-notch” educational leaders remain in schools all over North Carolina, at least according to the teachers who work with them.

Additional data concerning whether or not there is a shortage of principals come from the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE). In a study (Roza, 2003) involving 83 public school districts thought to be impacted from shortages of principals in 10 regions across the nation they noted:

- The average district receives 17 applicants for each principal position, a modest decline of perhaps two applicants per position over seven years.
- Nearly two-thirds of human resource directors report little difficulty finding principals
- In most regional labor markets studied, increased numbers of applicants in some districts are offset by decreases or no change in others.
- Rural educators, who receive the lowest number of applicants per position, are largely unconcerned about a principal shortage. (Roza, 2003, p. 1)

The CRPE data show that some school districts receive as many as 40 applicants per position opening while others receive no more than four per opening. “Not surprisingly, districts with the fewest applicants are typically those with high poverty, higher concentrations of poor and minority students, low per-pupil
“Redefining” Educational Leadership: The Superintendent as CEO

Manifesto (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003) claimants now move to push aside the educational “cartel’s” (p. 11) hold on leadership by casting the “school leader as CEO,” a metaphor that has a long history in educational administration of which he is either unaware or omits. In fact, the idea of the superintendent of schools as the chief executive officer is as old as Elwood P. Cubberley’s (1916/1929) classic text Public School Administration in which he declared that “He [the superintendent] is the executive officer of the school board, and also its eyes, and ears, and brains” (p. 222). Cubberley (1916/1929) went on to say that the superintendent’s future success “will to a rather large degree depend upon his intelligent understanding of the scientific and industrial world about him” (p. 224). Cubberley’s description was highly influenced by the burgeoning growth of the business-industrial sector in which “a new type of businessman rose to leadership: the professional executive” (Cochran, 1957, p. 11). Educators emulated practices from business (Callahan, 1962, p. 216). In his study of the urban superintendency Cuban (1976) notes that school superintendents viewed themselves as “chief administrators” as early as 1871 (at least 20%) (p. 122), but that by the time period 1911-1920 the business executive model had become dominant (p. 125).

So while Manifesto textual adherents are fond of exhortation for better business practices in schools, business thinking has had many decades of infiltration into educational administration and many of the same intellectual founders of both business and public administration are also read and highly influential (for better or for worse) in educational administration such as Frederick Taylor, Henry Fayol, Chester Barnard, Lyndall Urwick, Mary Parker Follett, Elton Mayo, Herbert Simon, Peter Drucker, Rensis Likert, Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman, Peter Senge, and W. Edwards Deming. A cursory examination of the texts in any moderately sized university bookstore used in courses in business, public and educational administration will reveal the parallelism which connects all three disciplines—undermining Manifesto (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003) claims that, “Expanding the pool of candidates for school leadership positions...and people from other backgrounds would bring new energy, ideas, and skills into our public schools” (p. 11). The Manifesto never identifies what these new ideas and skills would be. Given the high overlap in the intellectual and theoretical histories of business, public and educational administration it would be exceedingly difficult. So it is not the fact that educators do not think like businessmen, what bothers Manifesto (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003) ideologues is the expectation that administrators should have some teaching experience. It is the teaching requirement to be a principal that bugs them. This is the “paper credential” they despise (p. 7). The solution is to dispense with it on the grounds that being an instructional leader is important, but can be delegated to others.

This stance is paradoxical. While Manifesto writers consistently argue for the lack of “heroic leadership” when condemning current educational administrators, they duck behind
the concept of “distributive leadership” (see Gronn, 2003) when leaders from business, public administration, and the military might not be up to the task of the same challenges.

The claim that an instructional leader does not have to know anything about instruction because of “distributed leadership” is a corollary to the idea that principals do not have to have any experience as classroom teachers. Manifesto authors make sure this is the case when they list the special attributes they think principals require. Not one deals with any understanding of teaching, instruction, or learning. They are all de-contextualized aspects of management, none unique to schools—which is just their point. By making teaching so simple anyone can do it (see Finn, 1991), no special expertise is required to lead teachers. Teaching is telling, and getting good results on state proficiency tests is simply putting together appropriate packages of rewards and sanctions and demanding teachers to hop to it. Those that fail to do so are “laggards” and should be replaced. When teaching is simplified so is everything else.

Manifesto writers do not even allude to the early literature on how principals actually impact student achievement through what they do in the schools (see Hallinger & Heck, 1996), let alone “leadership content knowledge” based on how teachers and principals work together to deliver subject matter knowledge (Stein & Spillane, 2003, p. 30). This knowledge is rooted in an understanding of how teachers impact student academic growth and how principals, “know strong instruction when they see it, know how to encourage it when they do not, and know how to set the conditions for continuous academic learning among their teaching staffs” (Stein & Spillane, 2003, p. 30).

This is not surprising either because Manifesto (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003) scribes essentially see leadership as inborn rather than acquired. They consistently refer to leadership “traits,” “qualities,” “talents,” “attributes,” “abilities,” “endowments,” or “capabilities” (pp. 3, 7, 11, 12, 14, 15) and depict what leaders do as largely hereditary. Leadership training is therefore marginal and can only “burnish” what is already there (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003, p. 12). While the “trait theory” of leadership (Stogdill, 1974) has been relegated to the historical dustbin because leadership studies “provide devastating evidence against the concept of the operation of decision-making traits in determining social interactions” (p. 64), Manifesto penmen persist in their presentation of what it takes to engage in leadership as being genetic and generic. For example, in presenting a list of superintendent “attributes” they say, “They [the abilities] are not so very different from the attributes needed for outstanding leadership in business, health care, the military, higher education and government itself” (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003, p. 12). Manifesto writers’ list of attributes (viz., abilities, talents, qualities, traits, endowments, capabilities) are summed as “character” when they sermonize, “It’s character that matters most, not credentials” (p. 13). And ultimately these are the “truly qualified school leaders” they insist we need (p. 21). They are “qualified” not by performance, but by definition.

Perhaps the most persuasive contrary view to the Manifesto’s perspective and the list of de-contextualized “attributes” is offered by the renowned military historian John Keegan (1987), an instructor at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in the United Kingdom. Keegan (1987) condemned the “traits method” and its assumptions: “The first takes as its premise the assumption that those who exercise military authority will reveal under examination a certain set of common characteristics. The second attempts to identify patterns of behaviour which distinguish leader from follower” (p. 1).

Keegan (1987) dismantles these assumptions: “Both are the methods of social scientists and, as will all social science, condemn those who practice them to the agony of making universal and general what is stubbornly local and particular” (p. 1). After 30 years of practice of military analysis and several best selling books, Keegan (1987) notes, “context...is all” (p. 3). But it is the context of educational leadership that Manifesto ideologues consistently wish away. It just does not fit their norms nor their political agenda.
But it is an interesting note that in business understanding the context has re-emerged as pivotal for success as a CEO. In a survey of American business conducted by The Economist in 2003, it was noted that when the CEO was an outsider, his average tenure was reduced by 3 years. The advice offered contradicts the Manifesto’s bias regarding the “talent pool” that should be recruited from business to upgrade educational leadership: “pick someone from the same or at least a similar industry. Considerable research suggests that at least part of an individual boss’s performance depends on context: the industry, the company, the culture in which he is used to operating” (“A Survey of Corporate Leadership,” 2003, p. 13).

Evidence in education of this premise comes from the San Diego City Schools where an outsider, Alan Bersin, a former U.S. Attorney, has encountered hostility from the teachers’ union over his top-down management style and has “alienated the powerful teachers’ union and angered some principals” (Keller, 1999).

Since military metaphors and the military are an often quoted source for potential leaders in the Manifesto, it would be well to note the ideas of leadership from one of the most influential military thinkers on the topic. General S.L.A. Marshall (1966) wrote that instruction was the essential art of leadership:

Ideally, an officer should be able to do the work of any man serving under him. There are even some command situations in which the ideal becomes altogether attainable and a practicable objective. For it may be said without qualification, that if he not only has this capability, but demonstrates it, so that his men begin to understand that he is thoroughly versed in the work problems that concern them, he can command them in any situation. This is the bedrock of command capacity, and nothing else so well serves to give an officer an absolutely firm position with all who serve under him. (p. 63)

So Marshall describes the idea that an officer must know the work of his subordinates. If he cannot he must at least know “the difference between the power to do a thing well and that of being able to judge when it is well done” (1966, p. 64). This places a different meaning on Manifesto (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003) claims that, “A leader may not personally possess every skill or expertise needed to perform every task in the organization” (p. 11). Marshall would demur in the ideal situation, but he would insist that a leader know when each and every task was well-done. That cannot be delegated even in forms of “distributive leadership” (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003, p. 8). This criterion does not eliminate the specialized training required for educational leaders. They cannot do every task but they should know when they are well done. More importantly, they should know what tasks must be done.

When it comes to school superintendents, Manifesto (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003) proponents declare them to be “education’s field marshals” (p. 13) and once again present us with a lobotomized list of attributes. But in this case they omit some important facts. First they cite the Council of Great City Schools study (Snipes, Doolittle, & Herlihy, 2002) of large urban school districts that were marked by closing their achievement gap. These are the “results” the Manifesto’s faceless voices keep harping on as important. What they neglect to tell us is that the superintendents in the four districts surveyed by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) for the Council of Great City Schools’ (Snipes, Doolittle, & Herlihy, 2002) study who were successful in reducing the achievement gap were all led by veteran educators (i.e., Jim Sweeney, Eric Smith, Rod Paige, Kaye Stripling, and Sandra Kase) most with long experience as principals and classroom teachers, and nearly all with their doctorates in educational administration. These are just the kinds of leaders Manifesto penmen insist we do not need with lots of paper credentials. They proffer that “no evidence yet shows a correlation between the credentials of school leaders and the results produced by the schools” (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003, p. 20). Apparently they do not consider the
MDRC’s intensive study (Snipes, Doolittle, & Herlihy, 2002) as “evidence,” especially since all four superintendents are veteran educators and none of the non-educators they define as “great leaders” (p. 16) made it onto the list. One successful school system cited in the MDRC’s study was even led by an ex-professor of educational administration (Snipes, Doolittle, & Herlihy, 2002).

A study of the tacit knowledge of school superintendents (Nestor-Baker & Hoy, 2001) may offer an explanation as to why veteran educators were successful and not one of the non-educators was cited similarly. Nestor-Baker and Hoy (2001) compared reputationally successful superintendents with traditional superintendents and found that the former “expert performers” have “larger amounts of if-then scenarios to draw on in navigating the superintendency, allowing them a seemingly intuitive orientation to the tasks at hand” (p. 123). What this translates to is actual experience in school administration and the ability to store large amounts of information about it for immediate use when the situation required it.

The criteria used by the Council for Great City Schools (CGCS) Achievement Gap Task Force are instructive. They were:

- A demonstrated trend of improved overall student achievement over at least three years
- A demonstrated trend of narrowing differences between white and minority students
- Greater improvement than their respective states
- Geographically representative or urban school districts (Snipes, Doolittle, & Herlihy, 2002, p. xiv).

Manifesto spin meisters do not explain this fact because it would poke holes in their heralding as “great leaders” the ex-lawyers, generals, governors, budget directors, and a phone company executive who head other urban school systems.

Two counter-factuals to Manifesto proclamations of non-educators who have not been successful are in Seattle and Chicago. Joseph Olchefske, a former head of a public-finance group in Seattle, recently resigned because the district had overspent its budget by $22 million (Gehring, 2003b, p. 5). In Chicago, the non-educator CEO could set “common accountability targets, [and] provided motivation through a series of increasingly severe sanctions beginning with probation” (Firestone & Shipps, 2003, p. 24). Schools that failed to improve (get better standardized test scores) “were put on probation and threatened with reconstitution if they did not improve” (Firestone & Shipps, 2003, p. 25). Here was the result:

After five years of struggling to get off probation and back to local control in about a hundred low performing, primarily black and Latino community schools, only those schools that were already cohesive communities succeeded. Others remained on probation for five years or more or, in the case of high schools, slippd further down into reconstitution status, which in turn led them to fall still more behind.

(Firestone & Shipps, 2003, p. 25)

Firestone and Shipps (2003) note that, “In 2002 the formal sanctions designed by the CEO were abandoned” (p. 25).

Presumably, if Manifesto (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003) text developers are correct that “It’s character that matters most, not credentials” (p. 13), the non-educator CEO in Chicago lacked enough of the former because he obviously did not have the latter.

Opening the Flood Gates: Transforming Unqualified Candidates into “Qualified” Leaders

Having manufactured a crisis of leadership through omission and tautological “common sense” contortions, the Manifesto (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003) authors now proceed to their solution—which is to “expand the pool” (p. 7) because of the problem of the “faulty pipeline” (p. 9). Having spent some time trying to convince readers that leadership is mostly genetic and that “out there” exist candidates “generously endowed with these many and exacting qualities,”

They can be found in the military, in business and higher education, in private and charter schools, in other branches
of public administration and in the nonprofit worlds of foundations and community organizations. In short, candidates may be anywhere and everywhere. (p. 14)

*Manifesto* (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003) writers then introduce their main agenda norm. But they will have several obstacles to overcome with the solution. Exhibit 2 shows their premise. They can only support the assertion that there are lots of “qualified leaders” outside of schools by insisting that leadership is largely genetic and therefore not confined to education or even to business (p. 9). Second, they have to: (1) erase or reduce all job requirements which is their favorite “de-credentialing” (p. 7) option and (2) de-skill the actual jobs of principal and superintendent by arguing that these administrators do not really have to do all those things anyway as they can be delegated to other people. The de-skillling option has to be pursued along with the reduction in job requirements; otherwise the problem of “transferability or job reciprocity” arises. This problem runs like this. If generals can be superintendents because they have similar skill sets, then superintendents can be generals. If business tycoons can be superintendents, then superintendents can be Fortune 500 or Forbes 400 CEOs. Since there are no known recorded cases of superintendents becoming generals or Fortune 500 or Forbes 400

CEOs, then the skill sets cannot be comparable. The *Manifesto* (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003) “spin” is to skirt this conundrum by defining leadership as genetic because “leadership is so much a function of talent and prior leadership experience that it’s a mistake to accord technical training a central position in the selection process” (p. 9). Then they remove all training requirements and de-skill the job. By taking these steps they ensure that there are oodles of “qualified leaders “out there” that only have to be “spotted, courted, recruited, and developed” (p.15).

On the other hand, the Air Force General who heads the Duval County (Jacksonville) Schools in Florida tries to dismiss classroom teaching as an adequate base for administration when he sets up a hypothetical scenario when a vice principal might be told to “build a team” but cannot because “nobody really taught them” (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003, p. 15) “because the military spends an enormous amount of money on developing leadership management skills” (p. 15). The ex-general’s lack of knowledge about educational administration curricula hangs out and it contradicts the *Manifesto’s* premise. “Leadership management skills” are taught in the Air Force according to the general, and in educational administration if he ever bothered to check it out.

*The Real Villain of Administrative Turnover: Deteriorating Working Conditions*

Working conditions cause administrators to re-evaluate their commitments. Pounder and Merrill (2001) indicated that time demands are a powerful factor in weakening attraction for the principalship. In the case of superintendents, Hoyle (2002) has indicated that some of the reasons young educators may be reluctant to consider the role are:

- financial pressures to meet the educational needs of all children
- conflict with school board members who micromanage the district
pressures connected to testing and assessment
• growing pressure and personal attacks from the media, political, religious, and business special interest groups
• inadequate salary and benefit packages for the job in all sizes of districts
• greater difficulty in recruiting quality teachers and principals
• growing numbers of disruptive and violent students and patrons
• too little quality time for family and personal reflection
• less community respect for the position of superintendent

To this list Glass, Björk and Brunner (2000) added the issue of trailing spouses, concerns about moving children, and turnovers and buyouts caused by shifts in board allegiances.

When it comes to principals, a national survey of high school principals and assistant principals by Pellicer, Anderson, Keefe, Kelley, and McCleary (1988) clearly showed the trends identifying administrative roadblocks as attention to details, lack of time, lack of funds, apathetic or irresponsible parents, and new state guidelines and requirements (p. 155). These trends have continued into the present.

But Manifesto writers wish these roadblocks away. One is reminded of the Walgreen’s TV advertisements about a “land called perfect.” Here are some examples:

Manifesto Ideologues Wishing Away Working Conditions for Principals (“In a land called perfect…”)

Principals need far more authority over staffing, budgeting, hiring, spending, day-to-day maintenance... Principals need far greater latitude to pick their teams... they must be able to make essential decisions about how their schools operate, to hire (and discharge) faculty on the basis of school need and individual performance rather than by seniority (and unconstrained by tenure rules), to deploy staff members when and where needed, and to reward exceptional performance. (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003, p. 18)

“...And while principals should be encouraged to participate in professional organizations, they must—always—be deemed part of the management team and not engage in employee-style collective bargaining” (p. 20).

The Manifesto spin doctors never identify any urban school districts where most or any of these conditions exist, nor are they forthcoming about how to create them. One wonders what the magic that exists in the “corporate style training and incentive program for our largest city’s would-be principals” (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003, p. 17) will do to erase the impediments to corporate style leadership. On these matters the Manifesto text is as silent as the sphinx. Manifesto authors engage in the same sleight of hand game with working conditions for school superintendents.

Manifesto Ideologues Wishing Away Working Conditions for Superintendents (“In a land called perfect…”)

Superintendents need much greater control over district curriculum, testing and assessment, and the means for holding people accountable for student achievement... Too often superintendents are faced with school board interference the hiring and firing of central-office staff and principals... Superintendents... must be given authority to select their staffs and school principals. (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003, p. 19)

The school superintendency is a position that occupies the apex of leadership requirements. Too often when non-educators are hired, other political factors are also changed in the job, as for example eliminating or curtailing the power and function of a school board. Promoting and sustaining workable board relations is perhaps one of the most demanding requirements of a superintendent (Nestor-Baker & Hoy, 2001). If a non-educator is going to be compared to an educator who has had to work with a contentious board engaged in deep micro-management of the
system, one is not comparing performance in the same job if the non-educator does not have a board.

Critical differences are reported when superintendents are compared to military leaders. For example, Horvath, Williams, Forsythe, Sweeney, Sternberg, McNally, & Wattendorf (1994) compared military leaders to superintendents and indicated:

Upper military leaders tend to have a system-level orientation rather than an interpersonal orientation. This study of superintendents suggests that superintendents have an integrated perspective, encompassing large amounts of interpersonal tacit knowledge and lesser amounts of intrapersonal and organizational tacit knowledge. This may be due to differences in job responsibilities between the two professions. (Nestor-Baker & Hoy, 2001, p. 121)

Some ex-generals have shown they can “manage” a school system (for example, Portland, Oregon and Jacksonville, Florida). Some have been flops (Washington, D.C.). Björk, Grogan, and Johnson (2003) indicate that former military officers in Kansas City, New Orleans, and Seattle found that “their success in achieving specified educational objectives was thwarted by deeply entrenched social, economic, and political problems” (p. 456).

Manifesto admonitions about “opening” the superintendency to non-educators must be viewed with great skepticism, especially so in the high-stakes accountability scenarios which prevail today and require knowledge of curriculum and teaching practices. This position was underscored by Hoyle (2002):

The search process should rarely be open to non-certified leaders from business, the military, etc. with no prior experience in public education. The scholarship and practice for successful district leadership require that the superintendent be an instructional leader who understands the social and intellectual demands of classroom teaching and other roles in school leadership. (p. 11)

Some Unintended Consequences of the Manifesto: Lowered Requirements, More Candidates, Reduced Salaries

There are some unimagined consequences of the Manifesto’s (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003) proponents which ought to be acknowledged. The first is their claim that administrative salaries will increase because “competition for a declining supply of quality leaders will bid up the price for superintendents” (p. 20). This is the reverse argument that there are so many quality leaders in other fields that education should be opened up to them. If all it takes to become a principal is a bachelor’s degree in any field, a background check, test passage concerning basic laws, health and safety, and special education requirements, the potential number of applicants will be substantially increased. When job requirements are lowered or erased, the cost of replacement is reduced. Salaries soon follow.

The basic idea is job de-skilling employed by Frederick Taylor in 1911 when he said, “If you can’t find good foremen, stop looking. Change the job. Simplify it, limit it, thereby leaving it within the grasp of the many” (Kanigel, 1997, p. 350). We have seen in the Manifesto’s approach that administrative jobs have been simplified and the existing requirements severely reduced. There will be no reason to increase salaries if there is a plentiful supply of candidates.

The teacher shortage which is upon so many states now in which they are turning to alternative routes with many previously uncertified teachers being placed in classrooms will not drive salaries up, but will depress them to the lowest common denominator, especially if the numbers are large. Expect teacher salaries to remain low (see Ingersoll, 1999).

Likewise, if all it takes to become a superintendent of schools in the Manifesto is a college education in any field and a careful background check, we have created an even more plentiful supply of potential candidates. There will be no reason to pay anyone $300,000 a year. The only thing that keeps salaries for non-educators up is that they are a tiny minority overall, though they may be 20% of the big city school superintendents. It is the other
80% who meet the requirements of the day that keep the existing salary structure propped up. The Manifesto's presentation of the fat paychecks for the "new" quality leaders is a sucker punch for anyone who does not understand the laws of supply and demand in the market place.

Misogyny Personified: The Re-installation of Gender Discrimination

Educational administration has had a long history of gender discrimination (Shakeshaft, 1987). Blount's (1998) Destined to Rule the Schools illustrates how after World War II new university requirements for entry into educational administration worked against women, and how some preparation programs put a quota on female admissions to graduate programs because they were worried about becoming "over-feminized" (p. 118).

Now in a time when more than half the students in educational masters and doctoral programs (Milstein & Associates, 1993; Murphy, 1993) are female, the installation of the Manifesto will once again work against women. In fact, data provided by the National Opinion Research Center for 2002 and published in The Chronicle of Higher Education ("Characteristics of Recipients of Earned Doctorates," 2003) show that of eight fields, education awarded more doctorates to women (66%) than any other. Education also awarded more African-Americans and Hispanics doctorates than any other in the survey as well. Compared to the field of education, only 38% of the doctorates awarded to women were in business.

Business has a worse record of women in top positions than education. While at the present time the number of females in central office educational positions is over 50% and the number of superintendents is between 13% (Brunner, Grogan, & Prince, 2003) and 16% (Glass, personal communication, September 17, 2003), the number of women in top-level business positions is around 8%, and this is an over-estimation since the figure includes Executive Vice President (Sellers, 2003, p. 96). There are only eight women in Fortune 500 CEO slots (Jones, 2003; Sellers, 2003). The number of women on S&P 500 corporate boards stands at 13% and at S&P 1500 firms 10% (Hymowitz, 2003). While it is estimated that 46% of all businesses are owned 50% or more by women, only 5.4% of new ventured backed companies were female-owned (Rosenberg, 2003). Linda Darragh, an instructor at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management who was formerly with the Chicago Women's Business Development Center, commented on the shrinking funds provided for women in the venture capital community: "Is the old boys' network coming back into play?... With limited capital, people invest it in deals they know best—that's human nature. But if women aren't in that network, they don't see the opportunities" (Rosenberg, 2003, p. B6A). The prevailing biases against women in business were underscored by a recent survey of corporate leadership published by The Economist ("A Survey of Corporate Leadership: Tough at the Top," 2003). Women are unable to land what has been called "stretching jobs" or find positions in line management. They lack the appropriate networks and there are fewer role models for them in which to find appropriate leadership images which are not male imitations.

The number of female combat generals is unknown. It will be news when one is appointed. A study of women in the military indicated that 31% of them failed to complete their first enlistments (McAllister, 2002). Women continue to have difficulties in breaking into top leadership positions in the military. It would be hard to imagine a more androcentric world. A culture is hard to change. For example, the sexual assault scandal at the U.S. Air Force Academy revealed "a chasm of leadership" and this gap had "helped create an environment in which sexual assault became a part of life at the Academy" (Gomstyn, 2003, p. A37).

Since the number of women exceeds the number of men in university preparation programs, "opening the doors" to unqualified candidates outside these programs may well mean the re-establishment of work situations which once again discriminate against women. Furthermore, the "attributes" the Manifesto advocates listed as essential to both the principalship and the
superintendancy are heavily masculinized. There is a history to such practices in educational administration.

Blount (1998) recounts that when men found themselves competing against women for superintendencies in the past, the men often attacked women based on their administrative “styles” (p. 53). And in a prescient passage extending all the way into the Manifesto Blount (1998) remarks:

He [the attacker] basically maintained that the superintendent should be more of a supervisor than a curriculum leader, a hierarchically separate administrator instead of a cooperative mentor. Interestingly, supervisory work could be undertaken by persons with little or no background in teaching, while curriculum leaders needed prior teaching experience. As teaching became more feminized, women superintendent candidates were more likely to have been teachers than male candidates...It is not surprising, then, that women superintendents’ interests sometimes moved in the direction of the classroom and toward teachers. That such an interest could be utilized as the basis for political attack hints at unspoken gender differences that could be exploited for political advantage. (p. 53)

The Manifesto’s marginalization and elimination of prior teaching experience as a necessary prerequisite for educational leadership positions is outright discriminatory against women. Studies of women in the superintendency show that they have had “significantly more years of teaching experience than do superintendents in general” (Brunner, Grogan, & Prince, 2003, p. 6). The already prevailing norm in educational administration is that “if one wishes to be a superintendent, one should not ... teach too much” (p. 8). The message is that this norm “does not support access for women or persons of color to the superintendency” (Brunner, Grogan, & Prince, 2003, p. 9).

Studies of women in leadership positions over 30 years show that women are more child-centered and child-caring (Björk, 2000). They have an understanding of child development and student achievement, and are more expert at learning, teaching, and curriculum, just the “attributes” Manifesto nameless authors might delegate to others such as “vice principal, head teacher or dean of instruction” (p. 8). Women are considered more collaborative and inclined toward greater democratic leadership styles and power distribution which increase job satisfaction among subordinates. Björk (2000) indicates that women “tend to be ethically oriented”(p. 10) and he is supported by a study completed in Canada which found that “49% of boards in North America with three or more women insisted on conflict-of-interest guidelines, compared with 58% of all-male boards. Similarly, 72% of boards with two or more women conducted formal board-performance evaluations, compared with 49% of all-male boards” (Hymowitz, 2003, p.B1). While female “attributes” are considered by some to be more aligned with educational reform efforts (Shakeshaft, 1987, 1999) they do not mesh with the Manifesto’s androcentric “attributes” which emphasize control as more commonly conceptualized in business executives and military commanders. That Finn’s 1991 book is titled We Must Take Charge is deeply indicative of how he perceives the so-called “crisis” in educational leadership today, and perhaps why military metaphors are larded throughout the Manifesto.

THE REAL AGENDA: THE PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

Like so many other critics of education, Finn (1991) has decided that the monopoly of public education is the culprit. The Manifesto’s strategy of de-credentialing educational leadership is part and parcel of the strategy to break the “cartel” (p. 11) that schools of education, state departments of education, and other related agencies such as accrediting associations have on keeping the “establishment” intact.

Corroboration of the privatizing agenda comes from none other than business guru Drucker (1978) who has written a great
deal on managing public service institutions. Drucker (1978) debunks the idea that the public service institution is “like” a business. He writes:

But the service institution is in a fundamentally different “business” from business. It is different in its purpose. It has different values. It needs different objectives. And it makes a different contribution to society. “Performance and results” are quite different in a service institution from what they are in a business. “Managing for performance” is the one area in which the service institution differs significantly from a business. (p. 377)

The idea of running public service institutions such as the public schools like a business is “the wrong diagnosis; and being ‘businesslike’ is the wrong prescription for the ills of the service institution. The service institution has performance trouble precisely because it is not a business” (Drucker, 1978, p. 378). Drucker reminds us, “What characterizes a business, however, is focus on results—return on capital, share of market, and so on” (p. 378).

Drucker (1978) then deals with another common misperception that somehow public service institutions need “better people” (p. 379), a cry as old as Henry Adams after the Civil War to Ralph Nader and Checker Finn today. Here Drucker warns: “There is no reason to believe that the people who staff the managerial and professional positions in our ‘service’ institutions are any less qualified, any less competent or honest, or any less hard-working than the men who manage businesses” (p. 379).

Finally, Drucker (1978) explains, “To make service institutions perform, it should by now be clear, does not require ‘great men’ (p. 388), or in Manifestospeak ‘truly great leaders’” (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003, p. 16). “It requires instead a system...service institutions are not businesses; ‘performance’ means something quite different for them” (Drucker, 1978, p. 388).

One of the hallmarks Drucker uses to distinguish between service institutions and businesses is that “they [service institutions] cannot be organized under a competitive market test” (1978, pp. 386-387). But the competitive market test is exactly what Drucker (1989) proposed 11 years later when he said, “America is the only major developed country in which there is no competition within the school system” (p. 235). So without the presence of the competitive market test, service institutions cannot be businesses. However, when a competitive market is created, then the matters of cost, return on capital, share of market can be applied. Finn’s (1991) agenda and that of the Manifesto is to create such a competitive market place for education since there are enormous profits to be had. Finn certainly understands the value added nature of the market place. He is reported to have received a million dollar contract spread over 3 years from Chris Whittle for supporting Channel 1 in the public schools (see Kozol, 1992).

Many of the signers of the Manifesto head private consulting firms and other for profit making businesses that see a new lucrative market for their services and wares opening up as the “cartel” is balkanized and dis-established. In this new land of vendors the public service institution will have been profoundly changed. Profits will be king.

Against this agenda stands the current type of educational preparation program, ensconced in schools of education on the higher education campuses of the “liberal” bastions remaining in American society. Removing professional preparation from these places would indeed be the first step in “Overhauling the power structure and its ingrained practices” (Finn, 1991, p. 234). Finn’s agenda is the creation of free market capitalism within public education. Indeed, the Bush Department of Education has funneled millions of dollars to “‘far right organizations’ that promote ‘an education privatization agenda’” (Gehring, 2003a, p. 22). Among them is the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence which received $35 million from the federal Department of Education “to develop a ‘fast-tracked route’ for alternative teacher certification” (Gehring, 2003a, p. 22).
Summary: Not A Question of Science

As ideology Manifesto writers have omitted much and exaggerated much. There is no national shortage of qualified educational leaders. There is no national “crisis,” though there may be fewer candidates for principals and superintendents in selected cities or regions because of poor working conditions and low salaries. And in the case of the superintendency, some school districts “churn” their superintendents, creating the image of a shortage (Björk, Grogan, & Johnson, 2003, p. 452). So the Manifesto ideologues have played fast and loose with the facts.

If the current landscape were somehow transformed into one dominated by the profit motive, then school leaders would be judged, as in business, with the return on profit, with often exorbitant salaries out of all proportion to their worth (see “High Profiles in Hot Water,” 2002; Lublin, 2002, 2003) and indeed we would need “new” leaders to toil in this landscape. That would mean that schools and the children in them would be conceived as profit centers, with the prizes going to those who produced the best standardized test scores using the cheapest set of inputs. How else is profit to be conceptualized in a competitive market place?

And the very real danger is that the “culture of corruption” that has plagued business (Schroeder & Hechinger, 2003, p. C13) may enter education. Indeed, if trust, character and integrity are part of leadership, the real crisis is in American business and not its school leadership (see Levitt & Breeden, 2003.). The laws of the market place, so rampant in Manifesto speak and its repeated references to accountability and “bottom line” metaphors, have produced deep and wide scandals, indictments and resignations in business profit centers as one business executive after another is found guilty of conspiracy, fraud (Frank, 2003; Lauricella & Pulliam, 2003) and unethical conduct (Lunsford, Squeo, & Lublin, 2003). It is this deep well of “talent” from which the Manifesto gang desires to draw future educational leadership. It is worth noting that in 2002, at least 250 public American companies had to restate their accounts (“Corporate America’s Woes, Continued,” 2002, p. 59) and that “the bosses of big companies command only

slightly more respect in public-opinion polls than used-car salesmen” (“A Survey of Corporate Leadership,” 2003, p. 3). The continuing and widening mutual fund scandal is more than coincidence. It is indicative of the impact of profit as the primary motivator for judging leadership efficacy (Lauricella, 2004).

The Manifesto’s ideology is about more than leadership. It is about shifting the locus of control of a public institution into the private sector. The question of whether the public’s best interests are served through the profit motive is not a scientific matter for as Shils (1968) notes, “no great ideology has ever regarded the disciplined pursuit of truth...as part of its obligations” (p. 73). The current cadre of leaders in the schools and the institutions which prepare them are major obstacles to this agenda. Let the battle be joined.

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American Association of School Administrators.


THE ONGOING WAR FOR THE SOUL OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

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For many school administration professors, *Better Leaders for America's Schools: A Manifesto*, published by the Broad Foundation and Thomas B. Fordham Institute (2003) is a declaration of war. More accurately, it is part of a recent escalation in a long-term battle waged by forces committed to making school administrators domesticated government employees. This conflict's initial hostilities occurred nearly 100 years ago when captains of industry, troubled by the course of public education, used their political influence to redefine superintendents as organizational managers (Callahan, 1962). This war for the soul of school administration has and continues to be centered on intractable conflict concerning tensions between democracy and professionalism in school governance—a fundamental disagreement that dates back to the formative years of public education (Spring, 2001).

Currently, three special-interest groups, each driven by different values and beliefs, are engaged in this war. The first group, referred to here as the anti-professionists, consists primarily of persons not readily identified with school administration; they are corporate executives, current or former political officeholders, foundation officials, and would-be school reformers. They seek to deregulate the practice of school administration, an action that would eliminate preparation and licensing requirements and thus allow local school boards to determine independently the appropriate credentials of superintendents and principals.

The second group, referred to here as the status quo-professionists, is composed almost entirely of education practitioners and professors unified by the belief that school administration is a legitimate but grossly mistreated profession. These forces rarely commit acts of aggression but their passivity and defensive postures unquestionably influence the war's course. Members are resigned to living with a standing arrangement that permits them to claim professionalism even though they are denied the most basic and fundamental trappings of a profession. Although this group is not discussed in detail here, its contributions to the war are noteworthy with respect to understanding the political climate in which deregulation is being pursued.

The last group, referred to here as the reform-professionists, is also composed primarily of education professors and practitioners unified by a belief that school administration is a quasi-profession in need of becoming a full profession. They encourage substantial reforms in administrator preparation, program accreditation, and state licensing standards. Viewing professionalism and democracy as equally important to reforming public education, they argue that deregulation will make local school systems even more vulnerable to political manipulation than they are now.

In this paper, I first examine two issues highly meaningful to the ongoing war: tensions between democracy and professionalism and the development of professions in this country. Then I critique two similar but separately published deregulation proposals: the Manifesto previously mentioned and *A License to Lead? A New Leadership Agenda for America's Schools*. The former has no identifiable authors and the latter was written by Frederick Hess (2003). My disagreements with these publications are organized around four recurring anti-professionist assertions: (a) there is a shortage of qualified administrators; (b) persons who have mastered generic management skills can be effective school administrators; (c) strengthening requirements (i.e., reforming preparation and licensing standards) will not improve the condition of school administration; (d) non-traditional administrators already have proven they can be highly successful. Last, I share my thoughts about the possible outcomes of the ongoing war.

*Historical Context*

Public education's governance structure was established
when the Constitution and its amendments decreed that this social service was a state responsibility (Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs, & Thurston, 1999). Guided primarily by the values of liberty and equality, states delegated much of the responsibility for this social service to local community officials. Although public schools were established as early as 1640, the office of superintendent was not created until the mid-1800s (Griffiths, 1966). Between 1837 and 1850, 13 urban districts established the position; by 1890, most major cities had done the same. The trend toward appointing an educator to this office, however, was not uniformly supported. Many political bosses feared superintendents would establish their own power base and then defiantly stand apart from the entangled mechanisms of big-city government. Ambivalence toward the position and the potential threats it posed to political elites were evidenced by the fact that several cities disestablished and then re-established it (Knezevic, 1984).

During the late 19th century, conflict between democracy and professionalism mounted. Many local school boards hired superintendents reluctantly and resisted yielding power to them over finances and personnel functions such as teacher employment (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). Political elites were especially wary of administrators who attempted to present themselves as professionals (Kowalski, Björk, & Otto, 2004). Yet, complaints about the misuse of funds, poor facility management, and the employment of unfit teachers had become increasingly common. Bothered by the fact that big-city school boards were abusing their power, Andrew Draper, president of the University of Illinois and later commissioner of education in New York, issued a report in 1895 urging school boards to delegate to superintendents the authority to employ teachers, supervise instruction, and manage finances (Callahan, 1962). The document was immediately attacked, not on the grounds that its content was inaccurate, but rather because Draper’s suggestions were viewed as being injurious to the principle of local control. William George Bruce, then editor of the American School Board Journal and one of Draper’s harshest critics; used his publication as a political platform to denounce the report (Callahan, 1964). This incident demonstrates that tensions between professionalism and democracy existed from the very inception of school administration.

Although administrators typically have been socialized to treat politics as antithetical to professional behavior (Kowalski, 1999; Malen, 1995), they recognize that their work occurs in highly political contexts (Björk & Keedy, 2001; Kowalski, 1995; Rowan & Miskel, 1999). In this vein, school administrators simultaneously face the public’s demand that they be accountable to the community and the organizational demand that they provide expert knowledge to make critical decisions (Shed & Bacharach, 1991). Many authors (e.g., Bauch & Goldring, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 1987; Strike, 1993) have discussed the dynamics associated with this inherent conflict between participatory democracy and pedagogic professionalism, including relevance to modern-day reforms (e.g., Sykes, 1991; Zeichner, 1991). These tensions focus most directly on power and authority:

Democracy institutionalizes distrust. Professionalism relies on trust. Because we distrust our rulers, we have instituted a system of checks and balances to prevent any interest or office from amassing too much power. Because certain practices rest on expertise and knowledge not widely distributed in the populace, we trust professionals on their pledge to use such knowledge in the best interests of their clients. These two systems of preference formation, service delivery, and authority allocation appear fundamentally at odds with one another, and the great historical puzzle is how a strong form of professionalism flourished just in the world’s greatest democracy. (Sykes, 1991, p. 137)

In democratic societies, intractable differences between meta-values rarely get resolved because compromise is accepted as a satisfactory alternative. Consider, for instance, disputes over state funding formulas for public education. The authority of school
boards to set local property taxes, an expression of liberty, and the state’s responsibility to provide reasonably equal educational opportunities, an expression of equality, are fundamentally incongruous. Adjudicating lawsuits in which plaintiffs from low-wealth school districts have sought more equitable state formula, judges have refused to rule that one value was more important than the other. Instead, they have found that some degree of inequality is necessary (and thus, legally acceptable) to preserve liberty (King, Swanson, & Sweetland, 2003; Verstegen, 1990). Even so, outcomes of finance litigation across the states have not been uniform with respect to the degree that each value is emphasized (Reed, 2001; Theobald & Malen, 2000).

Similar accommodations have been fashioned to ameliorate tensions between democracy and professionalism, with the degree of authority and trust granted by society varying from profession to profession. In the case of school administration, practitioners have been allowed to claim professionalism but they have been granted relatively little trust and freedom away from their immediate workplace. Recent reform initiatives empowering parents and other citizens have reduced the autonomy of educators even more (Bauch & Goldring, 1998). Within this context, deregulation would tip the scales decidedly toward politics and disrupt an essential equilibrium.

Examining the historical roots of medicine and law, Connelly and Rosenberg (2003) discovered that these occupations had to overcome suspicions and political interventions before becoming established professions. In both, internal reform, initiated and sustained under the umbrella of a unified national organization, preceded political action necessary to promulgate laws favorable to professionalism. The history of the medical profession provides a relevant example for school administration.

Circa 1830, many states amended licensing laws for physicians making a diploma from a medical school equivalent to a license to practice. This iteration of deregulation created an entrepreneurial environment in which many students of limited ability or academic interest paid high tuition costs to get degrees from sham institutions. America soon had a glut of physicians, many unqualified to perform services entrusted to them. Even worse, some who had received diplomas were actually illiterate. The negative effects of states relinquishing their authority over licensing physicians were still apparent nearly a century later. In 1914, for example, fewer than 60% of Wisconsin’s 2,800 medical practitioners earned enough to pay income taxes (Numbers, 1988).

Circa 1900, astute observers recognized that the medical profession had been damaged severely by (a) an inability to separate legitimate preparation programs from shoddy entrepreneurial programs, (b) the absence of defining criteria that could be used to separate qualified and unqualified practitioners, and (c) a legal environment that allowed fads and unproven therapies to coexist with those grounded in science, theory, and research (Connelly & Rosenberg, 2003). Although this problem was nested in politics, it was resolved through internal reform. Most notably, the American Medical Association assumed an aggressive posture and established standards for accrediting medical schools. Thereafter, Abraham Flexner, ironically a school principal from Louisville and not a physician, wrote the book, Medical Education in the United States and Canada. His treatise, published in 1910, and commonly referred to as the Flexner Report, called for a medical school curriculum composed of strong biomedical sciences and hands-on clinical training (Numbers, 1988). Once the medical profession convinced policymakers that a relevant national curriculum for preparing physicians had been formulated and that rigorous standards for accrediting medical schools had been adopted, state control over licensing was reinstated. Quickly thereafter, ineffective preparation programs closed, the number of licensed physicians declined dramatically, and the quality of medical practice increased considerably.

The legal profession has a similar history. After the American Bar Association established standards for law school accreditation, many states abandoned open-door policies allowing individuals with minimal credentials to practice law. In the aftermath of these
reforms, law schools have been permitted to control their curricula but states have retained control of licensure. Regulating the standard for passing the bar exam allows states to determine how many attorneys are admitted to practice in a given year (Connelly & Rosenberg, 2003). In both medicine and law, elitism was an important factor with respect to the public’s acceptance of professionalism. Put another way, society viewed professional birth control, accomplished through program accreditation and state licensing, as evidence of rigor; autonomy and trust were then awarded in relation to the perceived difficulty of entering a profession.

The evolution of medicine and law helps us to understand why educators have been relegated to the status of quasi-professionals. Unlike these two respected professions, school administration lacks a unified national association enrolling both practitioners and professors, a common practice-based curriculum used across preparation programs, rigorous standards for accrediting preparation programs, and exact standards for state licensing. These shortcomings assume added importance in the present turbulent environment in which policymakers are asked to determine the fate of school administration. Likewise, they provide a context for grasping the political and philosophical dispositions that divide the combatants in the ongoing war. The status quo-professionists, for instance, are threatened by the present turmoil but not to the extent that they are willing to relinquish their opposition to dealing with these weaknesses. While simultaneously opposing deregulation, they patiently and anxiously hope that policymakers will leave things as they are. The anti-professionists and reform-professionists, by comparison, view political tumult as an opportunity to win the war. For the anti-professionists, victory requires total deregulation; for the reform-professionists, victory requires removing the deficiencies that thwart professionalism.

Critiquing the Anti-Professionist Agenda

Logically, deregulation of a profession is prudent when there is no discernible need for the state to protect the public from practitioners. That is, such policy is justified if the knowledge base for the position is found to be fraudulent or irrelevant (Kowalski, Björk, & Otto, 2004). The Manifesto and A License to Lead? are characterized by four recurring topics suggesting that current preparation and licensing requirements are immaterial and responsible for a critical shortage of qualified practitioners. Each theme is critiqued.

Alleged Shortage of Qualified Administrators

Deregulating a controlled occupation becomes more probable when policymakers believe that a critical labor shortage threatens society’s interests (Kowalski & Sweetland, 2002; Sweetland & Kowalski, 2004). This assertion predictably is highlighted in the early portions of both deregulation documents. The Manifesto quotes the executive director of the National Association of Elementary School Principals who laments a shortage of “qualified” principals (p. 16). Hess (2003) quotes the executive director of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) who laments a shortage of “good” superintendent candidates (p. 1). According to the Manifesto, the core issue in the labor shortage problem “is not one of quantity: Most states have plenty of people licensed as school administrators, often more than they have positions to fill. The urgent problem is quality” (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003, p. 16). Despite the fact that the anti-professionists frame the supply problem qualitatively, they never define critical adjectives such as “good,” “qualified,” and “successful.”

The reform-professionists have a different perspective of the alleged labor shortage. They admit that programs of dubious quality produce under-qualified candidates but they do not concede that this unfortunate circumstance produces a shortage of qualified administrators. In a recent article published in the Journal of School Leadership (Kowalski, 2003b), I addressed this issue as it pertains to superintendents. After evaluating evidence using economist definitions, I concluded that claims of a serious shortage of qualified practitioners were invalid. Although declines in the
number of superintendent applicants have been documented (e.g., Glass, 2001; O’Connell, 2000), the size of applicant pools remains relatively large. As an example, a recent study asked national consultants to identify the average size of superintendent applicant pools for searches conducted by them. None reported average pools of less than 10; only 21% reported that the average was between 10 and 20 and 53% reported it was over 30 (Glass, 2001). Clearly, some school districts experience difficulty attracting qualified applicants but they typically are placed at a disadvantage because of poor working conditions, low salaries, and a lack of local community support.

In truth, the supply of teachers and administrators usually has exceeded demand considerably (Bliss, 1988). Although the causes of this condition are debatable, the economic effect is quite clear. Large applicant pools have permitted school boards to determine employee salaries politically—that is, on the basis of community sentiments. As applicant pools dwindle, market conditions are more apt to influence salaries. The easiest and least expensive way to prevent this from happening is to discontinue professional preparation and licensing as means of sustaining large applicant pools.

Alleged Nature of School Administration as Generic Management

Calls for deregulation also are predicated on the conviction that generic management skills, regardless of the context in which they were acquired or previously applied, are easily transferable to districts and schools. In an effort to gain public acceptance of this dubious claim, the anti-professionists attempt to (a) disassociate teaching from school administration, (b) declare professional preparation and licensing unessential, and (c) disavow the contention that there are real differences between managing a business and administering a school. Hess (2003), for example, rejects the notion that principals must have been teachers to monitor classrooms by suggesting that this requirement “may have been plausible when we did not collect outcome data on teachers, and administrators had little capacity to judge teacher effectiveness except by observing the occasional class and monitoring parental complaints” (p. 8). He adds that today “we have a wealth of data on achievement, and entrepreneurial managers are finding ways to gather more data on more facets of teacher performance” (p. 8).

Unfortunately, he did not disclose the nature of these data or the facets of teacher performance to which he was referring. Even so, this perspective of a principal-teacher relationship narrowly focuses on summative evaluation. In our best and most effective schools, principals have been transformational leaders devoting much of their energy to improving teacher performance.

Authors of the Manifesto attack the traditional requirement of teaching experience by proclaiming that management qualifications are more important than education credentials. For a principal, their list of qualifications includes a bachelor’s degree (presumably in any field), a careful background check, and passing a test on basic laws and regulations pertinent to a principal’s job. For a superintendent, they include only a college education and a careful background check. In this and several other ways, the Manifesto makes sharp bureaucratic distinctions between superintendents and principals. For example, the authors wrote: “If superintendents are education’s field marshals, principals are its front-line officers” (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003, p. 29). Perhaps the managers from outside the profession who want to be field marshals would be offended if they had to take a test on basic laws and regulations pertinent to administering a school district. If the generic management concept espoused in the Manifesto were extended to the armed services, corporate CEOs and school superintendents could become generals without prior military service. Thankfully, members of Congress have not fallen victim to this peculiar management philosophy.

Hess (2003) also discredits the idea that administration in public education is unique. He refers, for example, to Sergiovanni’s distinction between corporate models of leadership and leadership in the schoolhouse, as a “simple-minded dichotomy” (p. 4). What message should we glean from this dismissive attitude? Are teachers no different from assembly line workers? Is constructing
a computer no different than nurturing the intellectual, social, and emotional growth of children? Are factories the same as schools?

Prominent scholars (e.g., Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Burns, 1978) identify management and leadership as separate functions. To Hess’s credit, he acknowledges this fact but then unfortunately fails to treat each function as essential to school administration. He wrote, “some schools or districts need managers, some need leaders, and because it is difficult to draw hard and fast distinctions between these, the sensible course is to opt for flexibility whenever possible” (2003, p. 4). The ambiguity of this statement aside, contemporary conditions require school administrators to perform both functions effectively (Kowalski, 2003a).

As noted previously, the contention that school administration is nothing more than a generic management occupation is not new. From approximately 1910 to 1930, this myopic idea was advanced by captains of industry and the politicians they controlled to ensure their dominance over public education policy. Raymond Callahan (1962) chronicled these dark days and the problems created by the anti-professionists of that era in his book, Education and the Cult of Efficiency. The evidence presented clearly shows that their actions and the actions of the education dupes they manipulated resulted in a tragedy. Callahan identified these four destructive byproducts:

1. Educational questions were subordinated to business considerations.
2. Administrators were produced who were not, in any true sense, educators.
3. A scientific label was put on some very unscientific and dubious methods and practices.
4. An anti-intellectual climate, already prevalent, was strengthened. (p. 246)

He then concluded, “The whole development produced men who did not understand education or scholarship. Thus they could and did approach education in a businesslike, mechanical, organizational way” (p. 247). Other writers, such as John Walton (1969), also warned that accepting the idea that management skills were interchangeable across institutions would likely remove administrators from the most critical functions in a school. Much more recently, Jim Collins (2004), author of the best selling book, Good to Great, repeated these caveats. Speaking about the need to improve our nation’s schools, he cautioned that trying to achieve meaningful reform by running them more like a business is clearly the wrong answer.

Disappointingly, present day anti-professionists, much like their forefathers, appear to view the purpose of public education and the role of school administration narrowly—dispositions nurtured by a proclivity to view public education solely through political and economic lenses. By resurrecting the imprudent idea that “management is management,” they demonstrate either that they are unaware of the history of public education or that they are unaffected by its moral lessons.

**Alleged Futility of Pursuing Preparation and Licensing Reform**

Central to the anti-professionist quest for deregulation is the assertion that reform is not a plausible alternative to improving practice in school administration. Authors of the Manifesto wrote, “tightening requirements will not improve the situation” (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003, p. 13). In support of this idea, they attack a core belief of the reform-professionist agenda—school administration should complement teaching. Hess (2003), for example, provides a lengthy argument as to why holding a teaching license and having teaching experience are unessential, even for school principals. Presumably recognizing that some readers will reject this contention, he offers a contingency argument. He tells us that administrators, by their actions, have made any valid nexus between teaching and administration irrelevant. In this vein, he wrote, “research has found that principals and superintendents spend little or no time on the curricular and pedagogical components that might plausibly be regarded as education-specific” (p. 8).

The anti-professionists fail to mention that many of the counterproductive behaviors of educators are deeply ingrained in
imposed institutional cultures that long ago relegated teachers and administrators to being obedient public servants. Numerous authors have described why public schools were forced to accept the organizational ideologies of political elites (e.g., Bates, 1987) and how these impositions produced school cultures resistant to change (e.g., Fullan, 2003). In his studies of American public schools, psychologist Seymour Sarason (1996) offers some insightful conclusions about the absence of professionalism and the inability of administrators and teachers to reshape negative cultures that deterred necessary improvements. Such information is conspicuously missing in the anti-professionalist literature.

Calls for deregulating professional preparation and licensure are grounded in the notion that professors, practitioners, and their associations are unwilling to reform (Björk, 2000). Recognizing that professionalism must have a normative base that justifies practitioners being given authority over their work (Sykes, 1991), reform-professionists actually have been attempting to improve professional preparation for some time. As an example, the AASA 1960 Yearbook (American Association of School Administrators, 1960) was devoted to improving professional preparation. Several decades later, two internal reform groups, the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (1987) and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (1989) produced reports. In 2000, the American Education Research Association, the University Council for Educational Administration, and the Laboratory for Student Success at Temple University collaboratively formed a task force, Developing Research in Educational Leadership. The purpose was to advance high quality research in educational leadership and last year, it released its report, *What We Know about Successful School Leadership* (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). In addition to such reports, individual scholars, such as Joseph Murphy (2002), have proposed reform concepts. As an example, Murphy’s model of professionalism is constructed around three metaphors: moral steward, educator, and community builder. Analyzing the content of suggested reforms, Willower and Forsyth (1999) found substantial consistency among the recommendations. Most notably they included more stringent selection criteria, an integrated curriculum based on theory and practice, required internships, and fewer but higher-quality preparation programs.

Unfortunately, the anti-professionists have shown little interest in examining conditions that have prevented reform and in evaluating the merits of proposed normative standards. Instead, they cite selected opinion-based studies suggesting poor practices and then argue that more rigor will be inconsequential. By doing this, they have evaded the core question: Will public schools benefit more from professionalism or deregulation?

*Alleged Successes of Nontraditional Administrators*

The anti-professionists realize that policymakers may be reluctant to support deregulation unless they are given proof that CEOs and retired military personnel can perform as promised. The evidence they offer, however, is primarily anecdotal and self-serving. Curiously, the *Manifesto*’s authors begin by giving a testimonial for Teach for America (TFA)—a national project funded by private sources and premised on the belief that highly qualified college graduates will become teachers if spared the agony and embarrassment of majoring in education. Promoting administrator deregulation on the basis of TFA seems a strange strategy given the anti-professionist view that teaching and administration are basically unrelated. Equally odd, the same authors who tell us to ignore credentials provide only two points of information about TFA participants: the cumulative number of recruits and their grade-point average (see p. 19).

Outcome indicators for TFA, such as participant attrition rates and student performance data, are never mentioned in the *Manifesto*. The reason seems obvious: some outcome data reveal the negative consequences of deregulation. Of the original 489 TFA recruits, only 206 were still teaching after 2 years—an attrition rate double that for traditionally-prepared teachers. The project has promoted teaching strategies in conflict with the knowledge base and has placed individuals with no grounding in
child psychology or pedagogy in classrooms where students most need highly effective teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1994). We should not be surprised then by outcome data for students who have been exposed to these inadequately-prepared instructors. Laczkó-Kerr and Berliner (2002), for example, found that students taught by under-certified teachers, including those from TFA, make about 20% less academic growth than do students taught by regularly certified teachers.

With respect to the success of non-traditional administrators, the anti-professionists provide a handful of anecdotal accounts from large, urban school districts where the top executive has literally dozens of professional staff members. Hess (2003), however, concedes that, “In those schools or systems where no one else is available to work with teachers on curricular or instructional issues, it is obviously essential that a school or system leader be willing and able to play this role” (p. 8). He then assures us that “Such situations are quite rare” (p. 8). In truth, less than 2% of the nation’s school systems have 25,000 or more students but 71% enroll fewer than 2,500 students. Even more noteworthy, 48% of all districts enroll less than 1,000 students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). Since district enrollment usually determines administrative staffing, we can estimate half of all school districts in this country provide neither superintendents nor principals with regular access to curriculum and instruction specialists. Rather than being rare, the schools Hess identifies as requiring the services of an instructional leader are the norm.

Many of the unheralded but true heroes in American education are found in small school systems where they practice under the most difficult and thankless conditions and receive the most meager salaries. Given that these situations are not the exception as suggested by Hess, we must ask ourselves the following questions about deregulation: How many generals and corporate CEO’s are willing to work in small school systems? What will occur when generic managers discover they are incapable of solving complicated and controversial educational issues on their own?

Final Thoughts

Our countless invidious comparisons to more established professions usually overlook the fact that at one time they too faced political interventions that restricted trust and authority. Leaders in these professions, however, took it upon themselves to eradicate detrimental conditions by first developing a defensible national curriculum and then adopting institutional accreditation standards. Only then, did they enter the political arena in an effort to reinstate stringent licensing laws.

The reform-professionists are well aware of this history and at least for the past two decades, they have struggled to overcome the problems that stand in the way of improving practice. Nearly two decades ago, Griffiths (1988) warned his colleagues that unless radical reforms occurred, the school administration professoriate was unlikely to survive. Clark (1989) argued that these reforms had to begin by changing abysmal admission, retention, and graduation standards. Regrettably, these and similar admonitions have not been taken to heart by the status quo-professionists and their effect on professional preparation and licensing has been insufficient. Students pursuing the study of school administration continue to perform poorly on standardized tests such as the Graduate Record Examination; they still score lower than graduate students in general and even lower than graduate students specializing in most other areas of professional education (Keedy & Grandy, 2001). And rather than eliminating weak programs, additional colleges and universities have been allowed to enter the market—many, even those extending to the doctoral level, being poorly-funded and inadequately-staffed (Kowalski & Glass, 2002).

Although the two documents addressed in this paper fail to present a compelling evidence-based case for deregulation, those dedicated to professionalism in school administration should not view them as harmless diatribes. The anti-professionists have money and political clout, especially destructive weapons when used on a vulnerable and philosophically-divided opponent. For me, the most telling statement in The Manifesto appears in the
document’s “Conclusion”: “The signers of this document appeal to America’s common sense, its pragmatism, and its passion to do right by its children” (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003, p. 39). Competent trial lawyers know that when the facts do not favor their clients, jury nullification offers the most feasible path to victory. Nullification occurs when guilt is established on the basis of fact but the jury acquires on its own sense of fairness, propriety, prejudice, or any other sentiment or concern (Kennedy, 1998). Clearly then, the anti-professionists are seeking nullification; they are asking policymakers to deregulate a critical social service on the basis of common sense, pragmatism, and passion.

The prospect that the anti-professionists might finally win the protracted war for the soul of school administration is indeed distinctive. While 41 states still require preparation and licensing for superintendents; over half of them (54%); have provisions allowing waivers or emergency certificates to be issued. In addition, 15 of the 41 states (37%) allow or sanction alternative routes to licensure (i.e., other than university-based study) (Feistritzer, 2003). Even if the anti-professionists fail to deliver a death blow and finally win the war, continuing with the present compromise ensures that other periodic escalations will occur. Far more troubling, however, is the prospect that reform initiatives requiring strong educational leaders will fail in those districts where they are most needed.

In the formative years of public education when administrators were characterized as teacher-scholars and before the dark days in which they were refashioned as scientific managers, prominent intellectuals recognized the importance of professional leadership. After studying the office of school superintendent, scholar-physician Joseph Mayer Rice (1893) concluded that the importance of the position cannot be underestimated. Even when the superintendent labors under very unfavorable conditions, he seldom fails to stamp the schools with his individual pedagogical ideas, thus giving education in his schools at least a tendency in a certain direction (p. 11).

Charles Thwing (1898), president of Western Reserve University, wrote that many superintendents in the late 1800s were “rendering a service to the people far greater than that which any other citizen was rendering” (p. 30). Now consider these statements in light of the observation Hess (2003) shares in A License to Lead?: “The sordid truth is that too often civic leaders and public officials privately express contempt for most school administrators” (p. 11).

Professions are considered to have three classical pillars: the cognitive, the collegial, and the moral (Starr, 1982). During the period in which school administrators distanced themselves from teachers and became preoccupied with management and politics, they seriously weakened all of them. Given the popular reform strategies of state deregulation and district decentralization, I and other reform-minded colleagues believe that it is far better to strengthen these pillars than to destroy them. Outnumbered and underpowered, we are compelled to continue our struggle against ideas and policy detrimental to the nation’s public schools.

REFERENCES


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**UCEA LEADERS RESPOND**

**SUPPORTING LEADERSHIP FOR AMERICA’S SCHOOLS**

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The demands made upon school leaders have become increasingly complex in recent years (Kochan, Jackson, & Duke, 1999). Leaders in America’s schools are being asked to do much more than ever before. Whereas, in the past, the job of school or district leader was considered as primarily managerial, the diversity of our society, the needs of our students, and the realities of our global society have shifted the focus from management to leadership (Marks & Printy, 2003).

In the past, educational leaders were expected to focus on keeping order, assuring the smooth operation of the organization, and ensuring that those in the school followed established procedures and policies (Lingard & Christie, 2003). Educational leaders today are expected to ensure that all children reach proficiency in their core subjects. The impact of effective educational leadership on student learning has been well documented, making it imperative that school leaders not only manage schools, but understand how to manage learning. They must also understand their role and responsibilities to students, teachers, and the community (Kochan & Reed, in press). Having such leaders is particularly important in our society today as we continue to see academic underachievement in schools with high percentages of minority and poor children. We must have educational leaders who have the capacity and the desire to move public education away from the status quo, when it is not working (Pajak & Green, 2003).

Today’s educational leaders must adopt a leadership style that fosters collaboration and the formation of learning communities in
schools so that all children will reach optimal learning levels (Barth, 1990). Such leaders must understand the teaching and learning process, be committed to creating school cultures that support learning and social justice, and have a sound understanding of the social, economic, and political forces that influence education. This shift in role requires a similar shift in the types of individuals that are recruited into leadership positions as well as how they are prepared and professionally developed over time. An essential element in assuring that such leaders are available, is determining the best way to recruit, prepare, develop, and retain effective leaders.

Over the years many have urged change in the practice, preparation, and policies controlling educational leadership (Young, Petersen, & Short, 2002). Reports from organizations and commissions have challenged educational leaders, policymakers, and leadership programs and professors to move quickly to implement reform.

The University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), a consortium of research institutions committed to the improvement of leadership and policy that supports the learning and development of all children, has been actively involved in reform efforts. In addition to working with its own programs to advance knowledge in the field and improve preparation and practice, UCEA also collaborates with state and national organizations in efforts to improve policy, preparation, and practice. It also accepts responsibility for assessing critically policy changes proposed by others. This monograph seeks to offer such an assessment of a recent proposal developed by the Broad Foundation and the Fordham Institute (2003), entitled, Better Leaders for America’s Schools: A Manifesto.

At the heart of this document, which has gained a great deal of national visibility, is a proposal that we reestablish who can become an educational leader, what counts as adequate preparation for this important career, and how one can gain access to educational leadership positions. This proposal, if adopted, would have major implications for the field; however, few of those implications would benefit our children, our schools, or our society. We appreciate the ideas presented by the contributors to the volume. Each introduced an interesting perspective on the question of how state policies, such as licensure policy, impact our ability to provide excellent leaders for our nation’s schools.

Points of Departure

Although we found arguments within Better Leaders for America’s Schools: A Manifesto with which we agreed, our understanding of the field and what would support leadership for America’s schools departs from the line of arguments offered within the Manifesto. Further, we believe that those who have written and endorsed the Manifesto have a spurious understanding of the role and responsibilities of educational leaders, particularly principals. We believe that their recommendations that an educational background is not necessary for success in educational leadership positions and that licensure should be dismantled are spurious as well.

In our opinion, the Manifesto proponents view schools, schooling, and thus the role of the educational leader from a narrow perspective. In this view, schools are perceived primarily as central players in fostering the economic well-being of the nation. The school then becomes a vehicle for preparing youth to contribute to the society economically, and for transmitting the culture. In this model, the leader’s central role is to implement the managerial and instructional goals of the school in order to achieve established outcomes. Generally, the key outcome is academic success, measured in narrow terms and geared toward economic issues in society. We believe that imposing this perspective on schools and schooling would create what Slater (2001) refers to as unbalanced schools and an unbalanced society in which order is more valued than freedom; self is of greater importance than community; intelligence is prized over emotion; tradition is considered more important than change; and inquiry is more highly regarded than creativity. We suggest that these elements should be
either in balance or tipped in the opposite direction of those who wrote the *Manifesto*.

We agree that part of the responsibility of the schools is connected to assuring the economic success of the United States. We also agree that a central role of the educational leader is to assure student success. Principals appear to agree as well. In a recent study, "When asked to rank their most important and time-consuming responsibilities, principals listed the top three as supervision of instruction, curriculum development, and student discipline/management" (Fenwick & Pierce, 2001, p. 25). There is also a growing body of research that demonstrates the importance of leadership to student learning (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Therefore, a central responsibility of the educational leader should be to assure that the teaching/learning processes in a school or school system assure student success. However, success does not mean merely that students perform well academically, but connotes that the school environment in which they learn and teachers teach promotes their emotional health and well-being and that of the faculty and staff.

In addition, schools are more than places where students gain academic skills and knowledge and are prepared for the workplace. Historically, public schools in our democracy have had not only an educational purpose, but also a moral one (Sergiovanni, 1998). Within this purpose, schools must function not merely as transmitters of the status quo, but as places where students are valued and the society is critiqued. Thus, the educational leader must focus not only on academic achievement, but also must be concerned about the emotional life of those in the school and with equipping students with the ability and desire to critique the society in order to assure that the democratic principles of equality and justice for all remain powerful tenets in our democracy.

The framers and the supporters of the *Manifesto* have proposed eliminating teaching as a requirement for licensure as a principal. They have also suggested that people from many professions be allowed to become educational leaders with little or no experience in the educational arena and without any courses or certification in the educational field. We disagree.

The notion that anyone with successful management experience can be an effective educational leader ignores the academic and emotional needs of students, the moral purposes of schooling, and the importance of context, previously noted. We would argue that to become an educational leader one must have a record of excellence as a teacher and deep knowledge of the core technology of schooling—teaching and learning. As Hess (2004) points out, our current requirements are not doing this. In most cases, an individual has to have a mere 2 to 3 years’ teaching (or coaching) experience and pass a written exam. While coaches and second year teachers may make very fine leaders, neither they nor others should be allowed to enter an educational leadership position, particularly a principalship, unless they have proven records as excellent instructors, understand the broad purposes of schooling, and have a deep understanding of the historical purposes of public education in a democracy.

We need individuals who have a comprehensive perspective of education, not people who view it merely as a means to an end. Teaching is an altruistic profession as is educational leadership. All who are preparing for the educational leadership role should have opportunities for dialogue and critique as a part of their preparation and should be able to demonstrate their knowledge of teaching/learning strategies, child development, assessment, and team building. We also believe that they must demonstrate a commitment to the profession by engaging in educational programs that provide them with the knowledge they will need to be successful in their field.

Leadership is both relational and contextual (Goodman, Baron, & Myers, 2001). This is another reason why we believe educational leaders, particularly those in schools, should have teaching experience. This background provides a contextual framework of understanding instruction, teaching, learning, child development, and the moral purposes of schooling. It also gives educational leaders credibility with their peers and thus, we believe will tend to generate a greater sense of loyalty.
In addition to our belief that principals should come from the ranks of experienced teachers, we also disagree with the framers of the Manifesto, that licensure closes the door to talent. The purpose of licensure, as Kowalski (2004) points out, is to ensure that all who are licensed to practice have a specified level of professional training and experience. Licensure requirements, then, ensure that unqualified individuals are not allowed to practice. The authors of the Manifesto point to a number of individuals and generic groups of individuals who they claim could be good leaders. We would argue that the individual who could walk into a school or district and provide exceptional leadership with no experience or preparation in the field of education would be the exception and not the rule. Recent research on alternative certification programs for teachers is instructive. Fenwick and Pierce (2001) point out that new teachers from non-traditional programs are more likely to indicate that they chose teaching because of the availability of jobs rather than a genuine interest in children and their learning. They tend to have lower academic qualification, particularly in math and science, than those who attended traditional four-year teacher education programs. (p. 25) ...Once hired, they are more likely to be rated “ineffective” or “poor” than traditionally-trained teachers. Nearly 60 percent leave the profession by their third year. (p. 28)

Dismantling or weakening licensure will not enable schools to hire better leaders. A more likely scenario would reflect the experience in the field of medicine when around 1830 licensure standards were amended so that a diploma from a medical school became the only criterion for entering practice. “America soon had a glut of physicians, many unqualified to perform services entrusted to them” (Kowalski, 2004, pp. 96-97). With more than 500 institutions offering school administration courses, licensing in school administration is arguably more essential than in highly controlled professions such as medicine or law.

An Alternative Route for State Policy Leaders

Over the past few years, UCEA in cooperation with the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation (NCAELP) has been keeping track of and assessing the impact of a number of key state and national leadership initiatives. A set of commissioned papers, for example, focused on issues of context, effective program components, professional development, and evaluation, and UCEA has recently published a comprehensive review of research on leadership preparation (see Murphy, 2004). Through these and other efforts, UCEA and NCAELP have developed an understanding that in order to move forward—in order to build programs that support leadership for learning—we must rethink and revise our practice in several areas. We must:

- Focus program improvement efforts on leadership candidate selection, faculty, curriculum, delivery, internships, and assessment;
- Support partnerships between preparation programs and stakeholders;
- Build the institutional capacity of higher education programs;
- Use program evaluation to increase our knowledge of quality preparation; and
- Use state level policy mechanisms to support quality.

The thinking that has focused on this final area, we believe, provides an alternative route for state policy leaders to support leadership for our nation’s schools and school systems. Specifically, we would like to recommend that states (1) strengthen state licensure policies, (2) ensure rigorous program accreditation and approval, (3) focus state resources on preparing a quality (as opposed to large quantities) cohort of leaders, (4) require institutions of higher education to thoughtfully invest in strengthening leadership preparation programs, (5) encourage programs in the state to collaborate on preparation improvement efforts, and (6) invest in the development of a rigorous and useful leadership preparation program evaluation system.
Before we begin to flesh out each of our recommendations, we must first stress the importance of collaborative planning and implementation. Our set of recommendations, if implemented, would involve or impact (at a minimum) various units or agencies within state departments of education, institutions of higher education, and practicing administrators. As a result, thoughtful and well-planned collaboration is essential.

First, we believe that states should strengthen state licensure policies. What we mean by strengthen, however, is not doing more of the same. Rather, we would like to see state licensure policies that are much more rigorous. As previously explained, we believe that one requirement would be a record of excellence as a teacher. We would also like to see the use of assessment centers that focus on performance, such as the ones provided by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), be a part of leadership licensure. The use of instruments like the School Leadership Assessment (an instrument produced by ETS-Educational Testing Services), provides limited information about an individual’s potential as an educational leader. Alternately, performance assessments provide a wealth of information that can be used both to assess an individual’s readiness to take a leadership position as well as to plan for that individual’s professional development needs. We also feel it is essential to maintain the masters degree as a requirement for initial licensure as a school leader. As Kowalski (2004) eloquently argued, the benefits of a masters degree that is centered around developing learning-focused leadership are essential both for preparation and the profession.

Critics have argued that licensure, rather than being a system for ensuring that only qualified individuals are granted access to educational leadership positions, has been a hindrance to providing our schools with excellent leaders. Although we do not agree that it is a hindrance, we do believe that the typical bundle of state licensure policies is not rigorous enough to ensure that we provide our schools with excellent leaders. If licensure is to be a true “gate-keeper” for quality leadership, its rigor must be enhanced.

A second recommendation is to ensure rigorous program accreditation and approval processes. Although accreditation standards are not perfect, they have the ability to create confidence in the public realm. They also make visible what is occurring in preparation programs, creating difficulty for those in power to hide purposes, processes, and power relationships which could be detrimental to certain student groups (Pajak & Green, 2003). It is essential that the programs approved by states are aligned with current national standards (i.e., input, content and performance standards) and that they are producing quality leaders. Those that are not aligned with a set of nationally recognized standards or that do not produce quality leaders should be neither accredited nor approved by the state for the purpose of licensure. Presently, there are far too many inadequate preparation programs operating in this country. States are best positioned to stop this sprawl. In fact, state level reviews of educational leadership programs in several states (e.g., Ohio and North Carolina) have led to the closure of inadequate programs. The closure of inadequate programs would immediately decrease the number of unqualified candidates seeking school leadership positions.

A third recommendation is to emphasize preparing a quality cohort of leaders rather than large quantities of individuals. Although there are multiple calls to prepare more and different kinds of people for leadership positions, we believe we could more effectively provide an adequate supply of excellent leaders by focusing and doing a better job with recruitment and selection. One example is the model used at the University of Texas-Austin (UT). The selection process for the UT principalship program involves tapping by leaders in the field, an orientation to the program, followed by an assessment center (assessment centers involve inbox exercises, interviews, public speaking), and, perhaps most important, classroom visits where each candidate’s teaching is observed. The UT faculty and their district leadership partners are looking for individuals who work well with all populations of children and who are excellent instructors. They believe that
putting resources into selection is essential because they are certain that the individuals in whom they entrust their preparation resources will have the dispositions necessary and the capacity to learn how to lead. Non-university programs like New Leaders for New Schools also devote a great deal of resources to selection. Their argument for doing so, like ours, is that there is no reason to invest scarce resources in a person who should never be given the important responsibility of leading a school.

For too long we have depended primarily upon self-selection into educational leadership preparation. This must change. In a time when nearly every state has had to make dramatic shifts in its budget and budget trajectory (e.g., 31 states have cut their budgets and 29 have tapped new resources), it is essential that we use our resources wisely. States should require that institutions that are approved to provide educational leadership licensure use rigor in the recruitment and selection of candidates for leadership preparation.

Our fourth recommendation is closely related to the second and third recommendation. States should require all organizations that are approved to provide educational leadership licensure, and particularly state supported institutions of higher education, to invest in strengthening leadership preparation programs as well as to find pressure points to emphasize quality over quantity. UCEA along with several other organizations developed a national set of input standards that provides an overview of the resources needed to support a quality leadership preparation program. This set of standards was commended by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration for use in all leadership preparation programs. We would recommend that states take a close look at this set of standards and ensure that all accredited programs are adequately resourced.

A fifth recommendation involves collaboration. Perhaps one of the best ways to encourage the improvement of preparation programs in a state is to support collaboration among state accredited preparation programs. Although programs within a state are often competing with each other for students and resources, if the focus was shifted from quantity to quality the state could develop mechanisms to enable programs in the state to focus on improvement efforts.

Finally, we recommend that states invest in the development of a rigorous and useful program evaluation system. It is essential that states, either alone or in cooperation with one another or with UCEA, develop a process for evaluating preparation programs that provide valid and reliable measures of the success of preparation efforts and that can be used to improve programs. Stakeholders frequently cite the disconnect between what is taught in many university preparation programs and what practitioners need to be able to do in their schools and school districts (Cambron-McCabe, 1999). This criticism may be related to the fact that faculty currently do not have reliable data upon which to base programmatic change efforts. A disconnect is likely, regardless of how well a program’s content is aligned to national standards, if faculty have no reliable way of determining how well they are preparing leaders for the field. Although many faculty members now collect data, most forms of evaluation do not reveal how well students will perform once they are in the field. “Until we have a process for determining whether or not educational leadership preparation has any of the impacts that we hope for them, it is not likely that we will have adequate information to engage in effective program development” (Young et al., 2002, p. 147).

Collaboration is Central to Substantive and Sustainable Change

Key to the success of any state effort to support leadership for America’s schools, however, is a commitment among educational leadership stakeholders to finding common ground and working interdependently toward the realization of jointly developed goals (Young et al., 2002). Although the recommendations we have forwarded focus on what states can do to support leadership for our schools, no single stakeholder group can do this important work alone. Ensuring that our schools have effective leaders must be a collaborative endeavor.
As the NASSP pointed out over 10 years ago, there are five categories of stakeholders with an interest in high quality preparation:

1. The higher education institutions that provide preparation and services to school administrators
2. State agencies and governmental units that license administrators and establish policies and regulations relative to administrative performance
3. Local and intermediate districts that employ school administrators
4. Professional organizations at state and national levels that represent the interests and offer professional development opportunities to school administrators
5. Other agencies such as centers, academies, unions, etc. that provide advice, training, and other services to school leaders. (1992, p. 16)

Although each of these stakeholder groups has an interest in quality preparation and a responsibility to support quality preparation, rarely have the activities deriving from these groups been coordinated. “Rather than functioning symbiotically, the agencies have tended to pursue their own policies and programs” (NASSP, 1992, p. 177). So it was 10 years ago; so it is today. This simply cannot go on. Quality preparation depends on coordinated and collaborative efforts.

**Conclusion**

Educational leadership preparation must meet the needs of our current and future school children. Teachers, principals, central office personnel, educational administration professors, researchers, regional service center personnel, Department of Education personnel, and other stakeholders have this goal in common—we are all working for the benefit of the children in our schools, school districts, regions, and states. However, if we are to realize the goal of ensuring educational excellence and equity for all children, we must first recognize that our work, at its core, is interdependent. Based on this understanding, we must rethink the policies and purposes that guide our work. Then, we must redevelop policies and practices to ensure that our schools have effective leaders.

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POLICY LEADERS RESPOND
THE GENIUS OF THE AND

SUSAN TAVE ZELMAN
Ohio Superintendent of Public Instruction

When business and educational theorists debate the issue of great leadership, they often choose opposing viewpoints promoting the tyranny of the or. Great leaders, however, embrace the genius of the and (Collins & Porras, 2002).

Effective school leaders understand that the fundamental concepts of sound business and effective education are the same. There should be no either/or dichotomy between the corporate leader and the educational leader. Good principals and strong superintendents must be both effective managers and instructional leaders.

As in business, school leaders must deliver a high level of performance in a complex operational environment and produce a quality product. For educators, that quality product is effective education. Their bottom line is measured in terms of human capital. In no other area of enterprise are the stakes so high.

In any enterprise with such critical responsibility, credentialing is good business practice. This is especially true in education. As important as credentialing is, however, we must make certain that it is not a barrier to participation by qualified professionals. We must streamline our requirements to ensure school leaders have the knowledge and experience to be instructional leaders, while not being so restrictive that we shut the door on those who come from fields outside of education.

In Ohio, we just passed legislation that will allow alternative pathways to credentialing, in addition to the traditional education program route. Senate Bill 2 (2004) will allow Ohio to develop statewide educator standards, create a credential review board, and establish alternative principal and administrator licenses.

These standards-based alternate routes will provide a variety of flexible, innovative ways to become credentialed. These will allow administrators to develop all of the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to be business and instructional leaders. This is the genius of the and.

School leaders must understand the moral imperative of providing all children with the education they need to compete in a competitive, global economy. They must influence the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom to close achievement gaps between our highest and lowest-performing students and schools, including students with disabilities, children of color, and those from low-income backgrounds.

To do this, school leaders also must possess business management skills, including legal understanding, financial competence, the ability to mentor and motivate a team, and most importantly, the use of data to measure performance and make decisions. They must be skilled in asset management and budgeting in a way that addresses educational priorities. One teacher may request a copier machine; another may seek funding for literacy training. The effective school leader understands that putting money into professional development in reading will bring the greatest return on investment – improved student performance.

Research into effective schools emphasizes that school leaders must be instructional leaders (Lezotte, 1989). Research on professional learning communities tells us that the corporate role of the school leader is to develop and infuse vision and goals, allowing everyone in the school to take a leadership role in carrying out that vision (DuFour, 1999).

Let’s not allow ourselves to be polarized into theoretical camps with either/or thinking. Let’s embrace the genius of the and to bring the best and brightest school leaders to our nation’s children.

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WHY I SIGNED BETTER LEADERS FOR AMERICA'S SCHOOLS: A MANIFESTO

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Center for Reform of School Systems

I signed enthusiastically the Better Leaders Manifesto. It is perfectly aligned with what I have long believed. My belief is based on what I have observed in public education and my knowledge of history and other business sectors.

What I have observed in public education in urban settings is that way too many principals and some superintendents are just not up to the job. I have known numerous highly effective principals and superintendents. These people have the complete package: high intelligence, high energy, excellent work habits, great interpersonal skills, core knowledge about the work, courage, passion, focus, and so forth. They are equal to the best non-traditional superintendents and principals I have seen. But there are not enough of these outstanding leaders to go around. If there were, one could argue that non-traditional leaders were acceptable but not needed.

But even if this were so, this is no argument for limiting urban school leadership positions to traditionally prepared superintendents and principals. For if non-traditional leaders can perform at the highest levels, why should they not be given the opportunity to do so?

The point is not whether non-traditional leaders are better or worse. The point is that urban schools and districts need the best leaders available. Why restrict these leadership positions to traditionally prepared leaders? I am unaware of any evidence that non-traditional leaders cannot do the job. I have heard theoretical arguments, but seen no evidence. And I have seen much evidence to the contrary. After all, I was on the board that elected Rod Paige superintendent in Houston and authorized the first Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) Academy.
There is also the argument from history and other business sectors. Superintendents and principals need some expert knowledge to be sure, and organizations that hire non-traditional leaders must consider how this expert knowledge is to be gained. But superintendents and principals are not comparable to brain surgeons or plumbers, who need state licenses. They are comparable to private school principals, business executives, university presidents, major not-for-profit executives, mayors, and even governors. History and recent experience are replete with examples of high performers in these areas who did not come up through the ranks. Other organizations are free to seek leadership talent wherever it exists. Why should school districts not do the same?

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